

The Strategic Value of Earth Observation: Maximising the Benefits for Governments and International Community

International Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC) of ISPRS together with the European Space Policy Institute (ESPI) prepared a side event of the Sixty-First Session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UN COPUOS, 29 January - 9 February 2024, at UN premises in Vienna, Austria).

The session entitled *The Strategic Value of Earth Observation: Maximising the Benefits for Governments and International Community* was held at the ESPI premises on 5 February 2024. All participants in the COPUOS meeting were invited to participate. The session was moderated by Gunter Schreier, IPAC Chair, ISPRS and Lucas Bersegol, ESPI.

The session was organised as a round table of invited speakers:

Rune Floberghagen, Head of the Climate Action, Sustainability, and Science Department, ESA

Sebastien Thailades, Business Development Domain Manager, OHB

Yana Gevorgyan, Secretary General, GEO

Asanda Sangoni, Head of the Earth Observation Directorate, South African National Space Agency

Pakorn Apaphant, Executive Director, Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency

Significant structural and applicative changes can be found in Earth observation activities in the past few years. The speakers of the session highlighted the democratisation of the use of satellite data and information, aligned with a 7% annual growth rate in the commercial EO sector since 2017. They highlighted that there are many challenges in various fields. Earth observation is still an unknown tool for most of the public, even though governments of UN countries are annually invited to UN COPUOS meetings to discuss issues of the outer space and Earth observation.

The speakers also presented their views on open data vs. commercial data and recommended deeper connection between research projects and practical implementations of their results to directly connect research with industry. They stressed importance of start-ups and SMEs activities in the Earth observation. Asanda Sangoni spoke about financial issues related to Earth observation applications in many areas of Africa. The content of the official part showed opinions on Earth observation from various directions.

The event was opened and closed by Herman Ludwig Moeller, the ESPI Director, and Lena Halounová, ISPRS President.

The number of participants was limited to about 100 registered participants, who also enjoyed an opportunity to have an informal discussion during the following cocktail. It was a very good presentation of ISPRS on the floor of UN COPUOS.

Lena Halounová



Gunter Schreier



Lena Halounová



Herman Ludwig Moeller



Sebastien Thailhades and Rune Floberghagen



Asanda Sangoni, Yana Gevorgyan and Pakorn Apaphant