Space’s Contribution
Recognised at the
Johannesburg
World Summit

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The 16th CEOS Plenary held in November 2002 at ESA’s ESRIN establishment in Frascati concluded a busy, but very successful year in terms of ESA’s chairmanship of the Committee on Earth Observing Satellites (CEOS). One of the highlights was the launch of a Johannesburg World Summit Follow-up Programme by the international space community, which bears testimony to ESA’s strong efforts at the Summit.

The Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS)

CEOS was created in 1984 under the auspices of the G7, with the goal of coordinating Earth-observation satellite missions among its Members. The 23 Members include space agencies that have active Earth-observation satellite programmes, while the 21 Associates include organisations that receive, process or use environmental data from space. ESA is a founding member of CEOS and a permanent member of the Secretariat, which is conducting most of the executive work in support of the annually rotating chairing agency.

Having chaired CEOS during 2002, ESA will be followed by NOAA in 2003, China in 2004 and BNSC in 2005.
The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)
The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development acknowledged the important role that Earth-observation satellites can play in assisting sustainable development. CEOS was accredited as an intergovernmental organisation through ESA, who attended the WSSD as a formal observer and participated in the negotiations underpinning the final documents adopted by Heads of State.

Several interventions were made by ESA at the Summit and during the preceding Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings.

José Achache, ESA’s Director of Earth Observation, addressed and presented an official statement to the WSSD Plenary, highlighting the role of space observations as part of an integrated global observing system. ESA, on behalf of CEOS, made a further intervention at the Plenary in the ‘cross-cutting session’ emphasizing the role of satellite Earth observation in pursuit of sustainable development. This intervention was strongly supported immediately afterwards by the US and Japanese Ambassadors to WSSD.

In addition, a number of ESA staff participated in the associated meetings, discussions and workshops, highlighting the use of satellite data. Thanks to the strong support from the ESA Communication Department, the Agency was able to provide two exhibition stands during the Summit, at Ubuntu Village, Johannesburg, one as CEOS and one as ESA.

The effort invested at WSSD has paid off. The 54-page WSSD Plan of Implementation contains 12 specific references to Earth observation, clearly demonstrating that the Summit recognised the importance of space technology for sustainable development. This outcome is a clear improvement compared to the Rio 1992 Agenda 21, where the need for global observations is barely visible.

Two important WSSD partnership initiatives concerning Earth-observation data were launched in Johannesburg: the first by IGOS (Integrated Global Observing Strategy) concerning the use of space and ground measurements for sustainable development; and the second by CEOS to encourage partnership in education and training in Earth observation. Both measures will widen the use of Earth-observation data to protect the environment, particularly in developing countries, and to ensure that this data becomes available to all.

To turn words to action, ESA organised a high-level meeting at ESRIN, inviting guest speakers from a number of UN organisations, the World Bank, the European Commission and developing countries. This meeting, which preceded...
the CEOS Plenary, was aimed at raising awareness and informally discussing potential follow-up activities. During the subsequent two days of the 16th CEOS Plenary, high-level representatives from space organisations around the World have adopted a CEOS WSSD Follow-up Programme.

**WSSD Follow-up**

The CEOS Members and Associates agreed to launch a ‘WSSD Follow-up Programme’ as a visible concrete action by the international space community in support of sustainable development. Three ‘Modules’ were agreed for an immediate start to address some of the areas identified in the WSSD Plan of Implementation where space-based Earth observation would be essential to assist sustainable development activities. The first, led by NOAA and UNOOSA, is aimed at education, training and capacity building; the second, led by ESA and NASDA, is focused on management of water resources; the third, led by USGS and CCRS, deals with the use of Earth observation for global mapping. Space agencies have indicated their willingness to develop additional activities in these three areas. The programme allows CEOS members to provide their contributions ‘as and how they see fit’.

**ESA’s Tiger Project**

ESA’s proposed contribution to the WSSD Follow-up Programme, the ‘Tiger Project’, aims at providing Earth-observation data from its latest Envisat satellite and other ESA missions to assist in managing water resources, primarily in Africa. The project would be driven by the needs of the local populations in developing countries, would facilitate access to relevant Earth-observation data, and would transfer the relevant technology to developing countries.