

**United Nations/United States of America International Workshop on the
Use and Applications of Global Navigation Satellite Systems
8 to 12 December 2003, Vienna, Austria**

**Opening remarks by Sergio Camacho-Lara
Director, Office for Outer Space Affairs**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this United Nations/United States of America International Workshop on the Use and Applications of Global Navigation Satellite Systems.

The Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, known as UNISPACE III, identified the need to determine precise locations on the ground for use, among other things, with Earth observation images and ancillary information in geographical information systems. This location information is needed for a large number of remote sensing applications. However, as you are all aware, GNSS applications are providing growing benefits in such areas as aviation, maritime and land transportation, mapping and surveying, monitoring of the environment, agriculture, power and telecommunications networks, and disaster warning and emergency response, to name a few. Particularly for developing countries, GNSS applications offer cost-effective solutions to pursue economic and social growth while preserving the environment, thus promoting sustainable development.

It is remarkable to see the field of GNSS developing as an instrument of international cooperation among the satellite operators of the current and planned systems and their augmentations. This is one of the central issues that bring us together today and for the rest of this week. The other central issue to promote that the developing countries and countries with economies in transition become fully aware, at the high policy-making levels, of the value of GNSS applications and develop the capacity to participate in the benefits to be derived from them. Raising awareness and education and training are corner stones for these purposes.

It is in this context that the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, co-sponsored a series of four regional workshops and one international meeting of experts with the Government of the United States. I am pleased to note that the European Space Agency co-sponsored three of these activities. The workshops presented the status of existing and near-term GNSS systems and their augmentations and also presented examples of GNSS applications that support sustainable development and protect the environment. The international meeting of experts brought to light many important on-going or planned initiatives in the developing countries and countries with economies in transition where GNSS technology was being or could be used to develop spatial location infrastructure that is basic for a multitude of development programmes or projects. That meeting of experts also identified needs to be met for those initiatives and for many applications to produce the desired results and recommended actions or projects that could contribute to meeting those needs.

Dear Colleagues,

This Workshop is convened as a joint meeting of GNSS Experts who attended those UN/USA regional workshops and the international meeting of experts in 2001/2002, and of the Action Team on GNSS, one of the 12 action teams established by the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to implement priority recommendations of UNISPACE III.

Under the leadership of the United States and Italy, the Action Team on GNSS currently consists of more than 30 countries and a dozen international organizations, and it has made a very important progress towards implementing the relevant recommendation made by UNISPACE III. I am pleased to inform participants of this Workshop that the recommendations made by the international meeting of experts last November were considered in depth by the Action Team on GNSS. Details on the status of the work carried out, actions taken or to be taken and recommendations on the way to move forward will be provided by one of the Co-chairs of the Action Team immediately following these brief remarks.

The objectives of this Workshop are to: (1) review the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN/USA International Meeting of Experts on the Use and Applications of GNSS, held in Vienna in November 2002; (2) review any follow-up initiatives and actions resulting from the series of Regional Workshops on GNSS; (3) finalize the recommendations and the report of the Action Team on GNSS; and (4) prepare draft terms of reference for the establishment of a GNSS Coordination Board. You have received these objectives in a concept paper prepared for the Workshop.

You also have before you a number of documents that provide relevant information on the state of important initiatives, the difficulties encountered in carrying them out and recommended actions to overcome these difficulties. We will review and discuss the contents of those documents together.

At this time, I would like to present the work ahead of us in a different way. We have a lot of information on the GNSS systems and their augmentations. We also have a lot of information on planned or on-going activities that would enable the use of the GNSS signal to support, or be a direct source of, economic and social development. We have representatives of the providers of the GNSS signal and representatives of the potential user community in the developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

I see our main task as one to establish a practical mechanism(s) for coordination at the level of the system and augmentation providers, for coordination at the level of the user communities and for a channel to exchange information between these two communities. The overall purpose of the mechanism(s) would be to achieve concrete and significant results. I see this as the essence of the work that we will conduct through our plenary and working group sessions.

The programme of the Workshop consists of plenary presentations and discussions, parallel working group sessions, informal preparatory meetings of the Action Team and a joint meeting of the Action Team and experts involved in the follow up to the series of regional workshops and international meeting that I have mentioned. Each one of these activities is important to achieve the objectives of the Workshop. You all have diverse knowledge and expertise to contribute. Our collective challenge is how to best utilize them. We will follow

the programme with flexibility based on feedback that may be provided by you the participants to optimize the use of our time.

It is my hope that we will not only agree on a mechanism(s) but that we will also leave this Workshop with acquired commitments. We in the Office for Outer Space Affairs are ready to make commitments but an effort such as the one that we are undertaking can not be the responsibility of one entity. I believe our presence here today is an indication of our willingness to make these commitments. This would mean a team approach with shared responsibilities and benefits for all involved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Government of the United States for co-sponsoring this Workshop. I believe that I speak for others in saying that this Workshop gives further impetus to the results of the previous series of workshops and international meeting. In addition, the holding of the Workshop in itself implements one of the recommendations made by the meeting last November, namely that there should be further workshops focusing on capacity building in the use of GNSS in various areas of applications that support sustainable development.

Dear colleagues and friends,

We have a busy schedule ahead of us over the next five days, but I am confident that a lot will be accomplished during that time. On behalf of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, I wish us all success in attaining the goals of this Workshop.

Thank you.