

Special Session Tsunami – 20 Jan. 2005
Statement of the *European Space Agency*
by **Jean-Pol Poncelet**,
Director of External Relations

Thank you Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, let me first thank the Government of Japan and all the Japanese officials for their warm welcome as well as the Secretariat, ISDR and the United Nations for inviting the European Space Agency to make a statement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What do the citizens of the world need? Most of them ask for more security, more food, more health, a safer environment and a better quality of life.

Meanwhile, we – the space community, just demonstrated our capability to land a probe on Titan, 1.5 billion km away, and return imagery and scientific data to support the quest for knowledge of humankind.

Well, space technology should also be used to better serve the cause of equity around the globe..

Space technologies can play an important role in the reduction of disasters. The use of such technologies can be particularly useful in the risk assessment, mitigation and preparedness phases of disaster management. They are also vital for early warning and for the reconstruction.

Let me briefly explain how space agencies work together in a very practical sense for the benefit of all countries by providing critical satellites data in times of need.

The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters, which has been active since November 2000, is an operational mechanism that delivers space imagery to **civil protection agencies**, emergency and rescue services during emergency situations. The charter is operational 24 hour a day, 7 day a week, and delivers data from various satellites.

So far the Charter has been activated more than 79 times in all continents regarding volcano eruptions, floods, earthquakes/landslides, oil spills, hurricanes, including 3 times for the recent Tsunami.

The European, the French and the Canadian space Agencies, initiators of this

Charter at UNISPACE III 5 years ago, have been joined since by space agencies of the United States, India and Argentina. Japan is preparing to do so, and the United Nations is an active “cooperating body”. The UN Office for Outer Space Affairs can trigger the Charter for all UN member states and any UN agency can request satellite imagery from the Charter to respond to emergency situations anywhere.

A Tsunami early warning system, as decided last week, will also require spacebased means. ESA supports the offer from EUMETSAT to use the METEOSAT satellites, developed by ESA, for the collect and the dissemination required by the Tsunami early warning system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many will ask what can SPACE bring to our citizens? The answer is simple. In the present context of climate change and natural disasters, if you hope that the 50% increase of the world's population by 2050 can be managed in a sustainable, conflict-free and peaceful manner, then you need to access information but also to transmit it instantaneously to several parts of the world. You need information about the Earth's environment, about the risk of hazards and its possible damage,

about conflict zones resulting from shared water, energy or food resources.

The Global Monitoring for Environment and Security programme – GMES -, an initiative of the European Space Agency and the European Union aims at providing information about the Earth's environment on an operational basis. It is a political tool to support sustainable development and human security.

GMES will interface with the international Global Earth Observation System of Systems, known as GEOSS, which is currently defined and shall be implemented over a 10 years period starting in 2005 after the 3rd Earth Observation Summit to be held in Brussels in February 2005. The process of GEO (Group of Earth Observation) lifts, for the first time the issue of Earth Observation to the highest political level involving all major governments and international organisations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ESA is determined to help the United Nations and all other partners to further promote the use of the space technology for the benefit of developing countries and to support the initiatives that may come out from this World Conference.

We need motivation of a political, economical, technical and social nature to strongly promote this cooperative mechanism worldwide.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in addition to learning about our planet and its hazards through space technologies, it is important to direct this knowledge to where it is most needed in a sustainable manner. And all this deserves a real effort of international coordination.

Thank you for your attention.