

Statement of ESPI

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Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues,

It is a honour and a special pleasure to be at the 4th edition of this space forum and deliver a statement on behalf of the European Space Policy Institute.

ESPI is an independent public think-tank based in Vienna focusing on European and international space affairs. As per our mission statement, the objective of ESPI is to provide decision-makers with informed views on mid- to long-term issues relevant to Europe's space activities. In this context, ESPI acts as an independent platform for developing positions and strategies.

The Institute fulfils its objectives through various multidisciplinary research activities leading to the publication of books, reports, executive briefs, proceedings and position papers as well as to the organisation of conferences and events, including our annual Autumn Conference.

The Institute is supported by 17 members including the European Space Agency, the European Commission, national space agencies and major satellite operators and manufacturers. Located in Vienna, the centre of international space diplomacy, ESPI has developed a close relationship with many international partners, from both established and emerging space actors.

The topics that are being discussed today are deemed of key importance by ESPI. As a matter of fact, over the past few years, ESPI has conducted a number of research projects and organised several workshops and conferences along such topics as space solutions to tackle regional and global challenges, capacity building in emerging countries, engaging stakeholders in the context of UNISPACE+50, space for supporting Africa and the role of space within the sustainable development efforts.

Through this latter research and its related activities, for instance, ESPI has been mapping possible space involvement onto the priorities defined in the Sustainable Development Goals, and, in this context, it has been seeking to reinforce a dialogue between space stakeholders and SDGs stakeholders.

A key focus of the Institute has in particular been to look beyond the space infrastructure issues to applications that optimize the usefulness of space infrastructure. We have hence highlighted how space can be central for improved agriculture, water management, the fight against desertification, protection of cultural heritage, or the establishment of renewable energy facilities. And we have also shown that more can be done on space-enabled telemedicine, e-health and tele-learning, especially in terms of making key actors, such as NGOs, aware of the possibilities. Indeed, what we ESPI been underlining through its research, are not simply the potentialities offered by space solutions, but also how to promote the uptake of better space solutions.

In this context, we shall not deny that a perennial problem of the space community has been how to communicate its potentialities to society and non-space decision makers. Often this has led to unproductive ‘*push*’, where stimulation of the ‘*pull*’ would have been societally preferable. However, pull sometimes presupposes technology understanding which seems to justify a degree of push. A sort of Catch 22, it may be argued... A main duty for the space community is hence to establish proper modes of dialogue with the diverse stakeholder groups. The dialogue should be continuous and bi-directional so that the space community can inform about the *potential of space* and stakeholders can express their needs and expectations in a more effective and realistic manner.

Beyond this much-needed dialogue, another important enabler that will greatly help to meet societal needs - be them of the people in the Mediterranean region or in other emerging countries – is offered by the expansion of cooperation efforts among scientific and academic institutions. In this respect, ESPI believes that mechanisms for an increased level of sharing of data & scientific discoveries among the scientists of the Mediterranean region could be envisaged. The overarching aim would be to achieve an expanded quality and availability of, and accessibility to, the respective space science data as well as optimise exploitation of these data.

In light of the unfolding global shifts in the very way of doing scientific research in the 21st century – as *inter alia* evidenced by the progressive opening of the research processes and globalisation of the scientific community, the surge of producers and consumers of scientific data and, ultimately, by the emergence of the so-called Space 4.0 dynamic – there not only appears to be much scope to harvest this objective but also a necessity to enhance open-source cooperation between international partners. Among other things, this objective could be for instance achieved by making use of centralised analytics that can expand the exploitation of scientific data by the different user communities and lead to the faster advancement of knowledge.

In this context, initiatives such as the one launched by ASI and UNOOSA with Open Universe must be lauded, for they also provide an outstanding model to be explored for expanding regional cooperation among Mediterranean countries; a regional space cooperation, that, in turn, may act as a catalyst for fostering closer political ties as well as economic and cultural cross-pollination.

Understandably, ESPI considers that these initiatives must also be accompanied by active diplomatic efforts from all the countries involved. Space diplomacy - in its dual connotation of *diplomacy for promoting space* and of *space for promoting diplomacy and cooperation* – has a major role to play here.

Incidentally, these two intertwining dimensions of space diplomacy will be the overarching theme of our 13th Autumn Conference, which will take place in Vienna on the 18-19 September to discuss ways to promote international cooperation, and explore the contributions of space diplomacy to harvest opportunities in the industrial, political, security and defence realms.

In the hope many of you will be able to attend this forthcoming event, I kindly thank you for your attention.