

SPACE WEATHER AS A GLOBAL CHALLENGE
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OPENING REMARKS

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Good morning everyone. My name is Victoria Samson. I am the Washington office director of the Secure World Foundation.

The Secure World Foundation is a private operating foundation that promotes cooperative solutions for space sustainability. Our vision is the secure, sustainable, and peaceful use of outer space that contributes to global stability on Earth. SWF works with industry, governments, and international organizations, and civil society to develop and promote ideas and actions for international collaboration to achieve that vision.

A growing number of actors are using outer space for an increasing variety of socio-economic and national security benefits. Many of these space activities use the same regions of Earth orbit leading to crowding of potential physical and electromagnetic interference. Unsafe or irresponsible actions by one actor can have long-term consequences for all.

If we do not strive for space sustainability, the cost of using space will increase, which could then make it prohibitively expensive for all.

Critical infrastructure, such as the electric power grid, satellites, and aviation, can experience significant impacts during space weather events. Space weather can even disrupt satellite services or even damage satellites. Although space weather is a natural phenomenon that is not affected by human activity, it still plays an important role in space sustainability.

Not knowing whether a satellite was damaged by space weather or by hostile action can lead to conflict, particularly if there is a tense geo-political situation on the ground at the same time.

Space weather can also affect the orbital debris population as years with a lot of solar activity can see an increase in the rate of orbital decay. Space debris can impede our continued access to or use of space, which in turn affects the long-term sustainability of space.

This is the second event on space weather that SWF has hosted. The first was held in November 2014. It was called, "Beyond the Flare." It was a Hill briefing that we co-hosted with the American Astronautical Society. It was designed to raise awareness about space weather, highlight current efforts to characterize, understand, and predict space weather events, and draw attention to the challenges of communicating the risks to the public, as well as the policy implications.

For more information and to see speaker presentations, please go to our website at www.swfound.org

SWF is absolutely delighted to co-sponsor this event today with the State Department because space weather, being global in its effects, requires an international response. Due to the scientific nature of the work required to learn more about how to mitigate the damage space weather can do, it lends itself perfectly to share scientific missions by a variety of stakeholders. Furthermore, it is less political than other conditions that may affect space stability, so it is easier to approach from an international perspective. It allows for multilateral efforts that can build up a history of cooperation that can then be enhanced as relationships among space stakeholders evolve.

Today, we look forward to a fascinating discussion. We have in this room top space weather experts who can discuss the international aspects of the U.S. national space weather strategy and inform policy-makers of the potential impacts of space weather on infrastructure and the global economy. Bringing together U.S. and international experts from government, industry, and academia, we hope the discussions today serve to highlight existing and future efforts to improve collaboration on space weather-related policies, research, and forecasting programs, as well as risk management activities from an international perspective. We believe these collaborative approaches will be even more important to address common challenges as the global community continues to rely on space activities, now and in the future.

Thank you very much for your attendance and for being here so early. And I would like to turn it over to our first panel, which will be moderated by Bill Murtagh.

Thank you.