



Remarks delivered by Dr Peter Martinez in the
UNGA Science Summit 2024 panel discussion on

Space and Sustainability Compacts: Partnerships for Food Security, Healthcare, Education

23 Sept 2024

Good morning. Thank you for the invitation to participate in this timely discussion on the role and contribution of space in attaining the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This event is made all the more timely by the UN General Assembly’s adoption yesterday of the Pact for the Future, a point that I will return to at the end of my intervention.

Space applications, such as Earth observation, satellite communication and satellite-based position determination, timing and navigation play an indispensable role in attaining the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in both developed and developing countries.

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs maintains a space solutions compendium that currently lists 914 space solutions across all 17 SDGs.

If one had to assign a keyword to categorize each of these solutions, the top ten categories of space-supported solutions would be in the areas of: Health, Safety, Transport, Infrastructure, Agriculture, Security, Environment, Maritime, Food, and Energy.

Roughly half of these solutions are global, and half regional, meaning that space solutions are having a real impact on the lives of people at a local level. Today, you will be hearing from several speakers, who will describe how they are developing such local and regional solutions to support the SDGs through Space and Sustainability Compact Agreements that link specific space applications and services with unmet needs in countries around the world in a concrete, replicable, and practical manner.



Many of these solutions would not have been possible even ten years ago. They have been made possible by advances in space technology, the advent of more and cheaper opportunities to access space, and the availability of capital to finance commercial space activities. Together, these factors have allowed a rapidly increasing number of governmental and commercial space actors on Earth to deploy satellites in space at unprecedented rates.

As of today, there are more than 10,500 active satellites in space. This rapidly increasing number of satellites, and the growing space debris population, has raised concerns about the growing congestion in orbit our ability to sustain these vital space services in the long term.

There are also concerns about the proliferation of counterspace capabilities, which raises the spectre of extremely disruptive and possibly irreversible consequences of a conflict in space that would threaten many of these critical space services.

These space sustainability concerns are being addressed in the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, while the space security aspects are addressed in other UN fora dealing with space security matters. However, rarely have these matters reached the level of a Heads of State event, such as the Summit of the Future. Yesterday's adoption of the Pact for the Future marked a significant milestone in the UN's path for tackling the space governance challenges at the highest level.

The Pact for the Future affirms that the multilateral system and its institutions, with the United Nations and its Charter at the centre, must be strengthened to keep pace with a changing world.

The Pact also reaffirms that the three pillars of the United Nations – sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights – are equally important, interlinked and mutually reinforcing. We cannot have one without the others.

The Pact sets out a series of 56 Actions aimed at addressing global challenges with



urgency and renewed vigour.

With regard to outer space activities, the Pact recognizes that the safe and sustainable use of space plays a critical role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Accordingly, it underscores the importance of the rule of law in space and the importance of preserving outer space for peaceful purposes. The Pact calls upon States to discuss the establishment of new frameworks for space traffic, space debris and space resources.

The Pact encourages the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to further consult on the proposal to hold a fourth United Nations Conference on the Peaceful Exploration of Outer Space (UNISPACE IV) in 2027.

It also calls for engagement of relevant private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to intergovernmental processes related to the increased safety and sustainability of outer space activities.

The recognition of the role of space in meeting the 2030 Agenda in this high-level document is very significant and timely. It signifies an expansion of the paradigm of sustainable development to encompass also our actions and behaviours in outer space. This may sound counterintuitive at first, but the rapid expansion of space activities in recent years has underscored the importance of thinking about the Earth's orbital environment and the radiofrequency spectrum as limited natural resources that must be used rationally and equitably for the benefit of all nations. Space sustainability is a concept that has been challenging to socialise as part of the sustainable development narrative because space activities are largely hidden from view and challenges to the sustainability of space activities are not as visible as other sustainability challenges on Earth.



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The inclusion of space in the Pact for the Future is an acknowledgement that reaching international agreements with regard to space debris, space traffic coordination and radio frequency management is key to being able to sustain these critical space services for the long term. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to learning of the progress made in the implementation of the various compact agreements.