

ITU Space Sustainability Forum

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Keynote speech

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Your Excellencies,
Ladies, and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking you for your positive response to our convening of this first ever ITU Space Sustainability Forum here in Geneva.

As we have heard, since the first Space Conference organized by the ITU in 1963, the ITU has been allocating frequency bands to space services and coordinating their use with other systems. Today, there are several thousands of satellites operating and many others are under coordination to be deployed in a near future.

And this actually works! 99.94 % of the total spectrum being used by satellite systems was free from harmful interference in 2023. This achievement is only possible thanks to the formal coordination and recording procedures for space systems and earth stations contained in the Radio Regulations as well as the collaborative effort of our Members.

In the last decade, the ITU Radiocommunications Bureau has received an ever-increasing number of filings for non-GSO systems, including satellite systems composed of hundreds or thousands of space stations and multiple configurations submitted for coordination and notification, and a continued and expanded launch and operation of non-geostationary satellites in outer space.

To give you an idea, in 2016 we processed 56 requests of radio frequencies for non-GSO systems. In 2017, this number jumped to 159, and then grew up to 377 in 2022. But in 2023, it skyrocketed to 569!

While the massive deployment of satellites will certainly bring a promising future in terms of broadband connectivity from the space, monitoring our planet and bringing communications to the Moon and beyond, it also transforms the current dynamics of space services into a more complex scenario that we need to take care of in a responsible and responsive manner.

Dear Colleagues,

During this Forum we are honored to have over 50 top experts and thought leaders speaking, and more than 600 participants representing UN agencies, governments, NGOs, the satellite industry, space agencies, academia, and civil society.

Over the next couple of days, we will hear from industry representatives about their approaches to space sustainability.

Today, during the first day of the Forum, we will gain insights from various Administrations regarding the development and implementation of national policies and regulations, which aim to meet the increasing demand for spectrum and orbital resources, while also addressing the sustainability of these resources.

Additionally, we will explore innovations in space situational awareness, collision avoidance and on-orbit servicing.

On the second day, traditional space agencies will share with us their experiences and vision for Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and beyond. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations will present their perspectives on space sustainability.

Not to mention the participation of the Radio Regulations Board and the international institute of space law.

I could not emphasize enough the value we give to the significant efforts of all actors to address the challenges of space sustainability.

Dear Friends,

We acknowledge that the impact of space sustainability transcends national and regional boundaries, and it is, therefore, crucial that space-related issues are addressed at the international arena.

The ITU is committed to providing a neutral platform where representatives from all regions and sectors can collaborate and find long-term solutions and lasting outcomes.

As mentioned by the Secretary General, the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference held in 2022 adopted two Resolutions; one on the sustainability of the radio-frequency spectrum and associated satellite-orbit resources used by space services; and another on ITU's role in the implementation of the "Space2030" Agenda: space as a driver of sustainable development.

Moreover, the recent ITU Radiocommunications Assembly held in 2023 adopted by consensus Resolution ITU-R 74 on Activities related to the sustainable use of radio-frequency spectrum and associated satellite-orbit resources used by space services.

Through these Resolutions, our 193 Member States decided that the ITU, and more specifically the Radiocommunication Sector, will undertake the following series of actions:

- The first action regards technical studies on the issue of the increasing use of radio-frequency spectrum and associated orbit resources in non-GSO orbits and the long-term sustainability of these resources, with a focus on the prevention of harmful interference.
- The second is to develop a Handbook on best practices for the sustainable use of frequencies and associated non-GSO orbits by space radiocommunication services. This handbook will contain individual experiences and guidelines adopted by Member States and Sector Members. ITU-R Study Groups have already started to develop the Handbook.
- The third action is the development of a new Recommendation providing guidance on safe and efficient deorbit and/or disposal strategies and methodologies for non-GSO space stations involved in radiocommunication services after the end of their life.

In connection with these actions, the ITU Radiocommunication Bureau has issued a Circular Letter inviting Administrations and all space stakeholders to submit their strategies for post mission deorbiting or disposal of space stations using frequency assignments currently recorded in the ITU Master International Frequency Registry, under coordination or notification processes.

Moreover, the ITU created a Space Sustainability Gateway that consolidates all the information received on the topic. I take this opportunity to invite you to visit this very useful website that will promote and share data on responsible behaviors in the operations of non-GSO systems.

We believe that that these three actions will be extremely valuable to all space actors, both experienced and newcomers, to prevent the growth of space debris and to ensure the long-term sustainability of spectrum-orbit resources.

The Radiocommunications Bureau I lead is ready to assist our membership in delivering on these three actions.

Dear Colleagues,

Space sustainability is essential for the work of the ITU, in order for us to continue ensuring access and efficient use of the spectrum and associated orbital resources. We plan to conduct this work in line with our usual philosophy: to focus on practical and tangible achievements, aiming at improving space sustainability through inclusive engagement of all relevant actors.

Once again, let me thank you for your collaborative efforts, commitment and responsibility being demonstrated by your participation in this meeting.

I wish you a fruitful ITU Space Sustainability Forum.

Thank you very much!