

SPACE AND SECURITY

Introductory remarks
Vienna, 5 June 2010

Distinguished Panelists,
Ladies & Gentlemen

Let me, first of all, extend a cordial welcome to all of you who have come to participate in this panel that will, in the context of the general topic of this year's conference of ACUNS, the Academic Council for the United Nations System "New Security challenges" discuss the particular problems and challenges that relate to space security.

We are fortunate indeed to have assembled for this panel experts of an exceptional quality and experience in this matter and I will introduce them to you shortly. In reviewing and discussing new challenges to security space as a particular and a particularly sensitive environment that can therefore present challenges of a unique nature to the international community must occupy a very special place.

The nature of this challenge and its new dimension was recognized by the international community and in particular by the United Nations at a very early moment, that is as soon as the exploration and uses of this new environment, qualified as the new frontier of humanity, entered a new phase with the employment of new technologies to secure access to Outer Space, the Soviet Sputnik being the first one in 1957.

Thus, the United Nations and the first space fearing nations in history, the former Soviet Union and the United States took first steps and adopted first measures, legal as well as political to shield, to preserve Outer Space from some of the worst consequences of the cold war, that dominated world affairs at the beginning of the space age. They in particular agreed not to make Outer Space another theatre in an all encompassing arms race. Their understanding to ban the deployment of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in Outer Space opened the way for the drafting and signing, in 1967, of a first major Outer Space Treaty, until today a sort of Magna Charter of Space Law that then also contained many a new principle for the governance of this new environment.

This is not the moment to speculate on the motives of the two super-powers of space to accept, at least in principle, that Outer Space should be used for peaceful purposes only and that all later treaties and instruments should be drafted in this spirit. Next to other considerations the magnitude of this new challenge and the diversity of deadly threats it could produce must, however, also come into play.

Today, as more than half a century has passed since the beginnings of the space age and space has assumed a vast and indispensable part in modern life, today as we depend on space and multiple space systems to communicate with each other and all parts of the world, for navigating our transport systems or coping with all kinds of natural events space and security are intimately linked and throw up entirely new challenges.