

Abstract

The United Nations Basic Space Technology Initiative (UNBSTI)

There has been considerable progress in the operational use of space technology and its applications following the organization of the Third United Nations Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), held in 1999. Today space-based assets such as Earth Observation, global navigation and telecommunication satellites are progressively more integrated into public infrastructures and decision-making processes and support a wide range of applications for economic and sustainable development.

The increasing affordability of the development of small satellites together with their growing capabilities has raised the interest in many countries that formerly were primarily users of space applications to establish certain indigenous capacities in basic space technology. Taking account of this trend, the United Nations has recently launched the Basic Space Technology Initiative (UNBSTI) in the framework of its Programme on Space Applications.

The Initiative is organizing a series of activities with the aim to support Member States in establishing a basic space technology capacity. This year's United Nations Austria/European Space Agency Symposium on Small Satellite Programmes for Sustainable Development, to be held in Graz, Austria, from 21-24 September, will, for example, consider the design, development and operation of small satellite payloads. Further activities under consideration include the compilation of an education directory of world-wide academic programmes in aerospace engineering and small satellite development, the development of an education curriculum for basic space technology and cooperation with educational institutions to identify relevant long-term fellowship opportunities.

It is anticipated that UNBSTI will create new opportunities for international space cooperation and contribute to further promoting the beneficial use of space technology and its applications.