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UN highlights everyday benefits from space science and technology



Mazlan Othman, Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs

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Understanding more about space science and that benefits that such technology has brought to everyday life is essential to helping the world address its most urgent problems, the United Nations said today as the Organization kicked off World Space Week.

Mazlan Othman, the Director for the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs ([UNOOSA](#)), used her message to mark the Week – which began today and runs until 10 October – to outline some of the improvements that space science has produced and the ways in which it might contribute in the future to tackling key global challenges.

“Coupled with advances made in other fields of science and technology, [space science] offers a wide range of specific tools and solutions that are transforming weather forecasting, environmental protection, humanitarian assistance, disaster management and more,” she said.

“Outer space is one of the most exciting and challenging topics, and perhaps of all the important topics on the agenda of the UN, none quite captures our imagination like outer space.”

Education is a particular focus of the Week this year, with UNOOSA seeking to improve the ways in which space science is taught and incorporated to schools’ curricula.

As part of the celebrations, UNOOSA and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), in cooperation with the Bangladesh Astronomical Society, will be organizing a three-day workshop for teachers in Bangladesh to enhance their capacity to teach basic and modern astronomy in secondary schools.

The workshop, which will be held in the village of Enayetpur – also known as the Space Village for its year-round astronomy-related events – will allow participants to use state-of-the-art astronomical equipment, and observe objects over their laptop computer screens live from robotic telescopes situated in Hawaii and Australia.

Beyond education, Ms. Othman also remarked that the Week serves to reflect on the importance of international cooperation on space exploration for the benefit of all humanity.

In an [interview](#) with the UN News Centre, she reflected on the more than 50 years since the creation of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), which reviews international cooperation, encourages continuous research and the dissemination of information, and studies legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space.

“The last 50 years have enabled an environment where we are talking to each other, and that is the best role the UN can play... through the committee, we have come up with the outer space treaties and conventions; how to register satellites; what to do if you find an object from outer space that is not yours; what are the liabilities apart from the duties and conventions.

“There are principles: principles of remote sensing, of telecommunications, guidelines on space debris, safety frameworks for using nuclear power sources in space.”

Ms. Othman said one of the committee’s biggest subjects in the years ahead will be the long-term sustainability of space activities to ensure that future generations can continue exploring space.

As part of the celebrations for the Week, a statue of Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, given to UNOOSA by the Russian Government, will be unveiled on Friday in Vienna, to mark this year’s theme ‘50 Years of Human Spaceflight.’

The theme commemorates Mr. Gagarin’s flight on 12 April 1961, when he became the first human to journey into space by making one orbit around the Earth aboard the Vostok 1 spacecraft.

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