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Author: Ms. Nunzia Maria Paradiso
ASI - Italian Space Agency, Italy

Dr. Gabriella Arrigo
Italian Space Agency (ASI), Italy

INTERNATIONAL SPACE FORUM AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL – THE AFRICAN CHAPTER

Abstract

On 13 February 2018, a new edition of the International Space Forum (ISF) initiative, entitled “Space Science and Academia for Sustainable Development in Africa”, took place in Nairobi, Kenya, and witnessed the participation of twenty-nine African countries represented by their Ministers, Ambassadors, Governmental Authorities, Heads of Space Agencies, as well as international experts and organizations, including the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the European Space Agency. Born under the initiative of the President of the Italian Space Agency, as Vice President of the International Astronautical Federation for Science and Academic relations, the ISF aims at fostering a greater involvement of Universities and Academia in space activities, to find better space solutions to global challenges. The first edition took place in Trento, Italy, and led to the adoption of the Trento Space Statement, which identifies the goals of the initiative and its intention to contribute to the UNISPACE+50 process and to the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. The African Chapter was the first ISF organized at regional level and devoted to the African continent. In Nairobi, delegations and keynote speakers had open and productive discussions on “how space science and education can support the understanding and exploitation of space benefits for Africa’s socio-economic development” and made statements addressing three specific topics, namely Capacity building, Environmental sustainability and Space partnerships. They adopted the Africa Page, which provides an African perspective and contribution to the ISF initiative and identifies the goals that African countries agreed to pursue. In particular, the Africa Page affirms that partnerships and collaborations among countries with different levels of space technology would support dissemination of space knowledge and technology transfer. It thus promotes networking amongst African Universities and Academia and their access into the global space network, which would foster the development of indigenous capacity building and a better exploitation of the existing resources. This paper presents the results of the African Chapter and its long-term goals. It is expected that the steps initiated in Nairobi will increase the sharing of space knowledge in favor of the African countries; will positively impact the development of space activities in the continent; and will foster a more informed and effective use of space technology in support of the sustainable development and of the implementation of the African Union Agenda 2063.