

## **Earth Observation Summit (Washington, 31 July)**

I would like to start my intervention by thanking the organizers of this Earth Observation Summit for their magnificent initiative, which I am sure that will allow us to go a step further towards our common goal of having and sharing global information.

Spain is fully aware of the high potential that Earth Observation may offer, through the wide range of applications that can be developed with the information obtained by satellite, airborne and in-situ observations.

Control of forest fires, desertification and marine and terrestrial pollution, as well as a better knowledge of the interactions between the oceans and the atmosphere and of the climate evolution at a regional scale, are all important applications for Spain to which strong effort is devoted.

Even when the future of remote sensing appears promising, one of its main current challenges is to evolve from demonstrations of specific applications to development of fully operational services able to provide the information required by the today society, with the geographical coverage and timeliness required. To do so, we should secure a smoothly transition between research and development activities (the ones covering most of the existing Earth Observation applications) and those addressed to the users since their conception. In this sense, it is essential that data processing is customised so that final users may access and use directly the information they received and support decision making.

Cooperation is the strength of Earth Observation, due to the high number of disciplines it covers. Using different Earth Observation systems in a coordinated way provides much better results than those which could be obtained by using such systems separately. In addition, this cooperation will not create any obstacle in terms of the necessary autonomy required by the operators of the systems when taking decisions. This is why Spain, through the European Commission and the European Space Agency, hereby confirms its commitment to GMES: Global Monitoring for Environment and Security.

In line with the conclusions of the different international forum, Spain also fully shares the need to coordinate the different initiatives existing all around the world in the field of global observations, where GMES will be the European contribution.

We are convinced that this Earth Observation Summit is the ideal framework to start working in this direction, with the objective of building a model of cooperation so successful as the one developed both by the European Space Agency and EUMETSAT and by NOAA and EUMETSAT in the field of meteorology, but widening this relationship to many more applications and countries, making it compatible with decisions taken at national level.

As far as Spain is concerned, I would like to highlight our willingness to contribute to the international Earth Observation initiatives. Let me so announce that in November 2003 we will approve our national Spanish Space Plan for the following four years, where Earth Observation will be a priority. As the most promising possibility, we are assessing the opportunity of developing a national satellite for remote sensing in a low Earth orbit, open to potential cooperation with other interested countries, and paying special attention to applications in the fields of agriculture, environment and security.

I would like to finish my intervention by expressing my trust that this Earth Observation Summit will be a complete success, as well as our willingness to contribute to the achievement of our common objectives, in line with the Declaration of this Summit, through an active work in the "ad-hoc" Group in Earth Observation.

Thank you very much.