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**Statement at the
GEO Ministerial Summit
“Earth Observation for Sustainable Growth and Development”
Cape Town, South Africa, 30 November 2007**

Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) I am pleased to be here at the GEO Ministerial Summit to report on the Office’s activities that contribute to the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).

UNOOSA, located in Vienna, Austria, is the United Nations office responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. The Office serves as the Secretariat of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS), an intergovernmental body of the United Nations established in 1959. It also serves as the Secretariat of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities that convenes annually to discuss matters related to the use of space science and technology and their applications by the United Nations and its specialised agencies.

UNOOSA is implementing the United Nations Programme on Space Applications with the aim to enhance the use of space science and technology and their applications for the economic and social development of all nations, in particular developing countries. Under the Programme, the Office conducts activities worldwide on subjects such as disaster management, satellite communications for tele-health and tele-education, management of natural resources, satellite meteorology, satellite navigation, basic space science and capacity-building, including in space law. Every year these activities bring

together a large number of experts from developed and developing countries to discuss and act on issues that are of high relevance to GEOSS.

A cornerstone in the capacity building efforts of the Programme on Space Applications is the network of Regional Centres for Space Science and Technology Education affiliated to the United Nations and located in Brazil/Mexico, India, Morocco and Nigeria. The Centres are in full operation and they are open to participate in any forum to discuss cross-border education activities in space science and technology, particularly earth observation and geo-information education.

UNOOSA is also implementing the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) which was established by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 61/110 of 14 December 2006. This programme is contributing to provide universal access to all countries and all relevant international and regional organizations to all types of space-based information and services in support of the full disaster management cycle. In 2007 a first UN-SPIDER office was opened in Bonn (Germany). Further offices will be opened in 2008 in Beijing (China) and Geneva (Switzerland). Additionally, UN-SPIDER will have the support of a Network of Regional Support Offices which will ensure that all countries benefit from the space-based technologies for disaster management. The Programme is contributing directly to the implementation of the 2007-2009 GEOSS workplan by taking a co-lead in GEOSS Tasks DI-06-09 – “Use of Satellites for Risk Management”, and CB-07-02 – “Knowledge Sharing for Improved Disaster Management and Emergency Response”.

UNOOSA is a Cooperating Body to the International Charter Space and Major Disasters. In fact the United Nations is the single largest user of the Charter having already requested imagery a total of 44 times, including recently for Bangladesh for the Tropical Cyclone SIDR.

I am also pleased to report that the Office acts as the Secretariat of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG) established on a voluntary basis as an informal body to promote cooperation, as appropriate, on matters of mutual interest related to civil satellite-based positioning, navigation, timing and value-added services, as well as the compatibility and interoperability of global navigation satellite systems. ICG will contribute to enhance the use of Global Navigation Satellite Systems in support of sustainable development, particularly in developing countries.

In closing I have the honour to refer to the agreement of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fiftieth session in 2007 to invite the Director of the Secretariat of GEO to report on a regular basis to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of UNCOPUOS on progress made in the implementation of the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) (A/62/20, paragraph 295). I am convinced that this will establish a closer link with GEO.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the exceptional work carried out by the GEO Secretariat under the leadership of Dr. Jose Achache and to reaffirm our commitment to GEOSS.

Thank you.