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21st Anniversary of the Disaster Charter: History, Status and Future of this Powerful and Productive
International Cooperation (6)

Author: Mr. Guennadi Kroupnik
Canadian Space Agency, Canada, guennadi.kroupnik@canada.ca

Mr. Luc Brûlé
Canadian Space Agency, Canada, luc.brule@canada.ca

INTERNATIONAL CHARTER: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The idea for the International Charter ‘Space and Major Disasters’ came into being at the third UN space conference UNISPACE III held in Vienna in July 1999. In the face of increasing destruction and damage to life and property caused by natural disasters and conscious of the benefits that space technologies can bring to rescue and relief efforts, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Centre national d’études spatiales (CNES) set out to establish the text of the Charter, which they themselves signed on 20 June 2000, while inviting other space agencies to do the same. The Canadian Space Agency (CSA) was the first to come onboard and sign the Charter on 19 October 2000. These three founding space agencies then went on to establish the architecture essential for implementing the Charter.

As one of the three founding members of the Charter, CSA will provide in this paper an overview of the Charter’s history, the role played by CSA in its development, and highlight the notable Charter milestones in its evolution. Examples of Charter images that have provided valuable assistance to disaster relief efforts will be presented. The benefits and strengths of the Charter from a Canadian perspective will be examined. The paper will conclude by discussing some of the Charter’s future challenges.