

Global change – DLR and the United Nations University agree on closer cooperation

The German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) and the United Nations University (UNU) have agreed to continue to strengthen their cooperation. Johann-Dietrich Wörner, Chairman of the DLR Executive Board, and Jakob Rhyner, Vice Rector of UNU in Europe and Director of UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, signed an agreement to this effect on 23 February 2015.

“DLR has been cooperating with UNU in Bonn for many years, particularly with regards to Earth observation. This includes the field of hydrology, where UNU is able to contribute its substantial expertise on the topic of water quality, and more generally in the area of assessing environmental risks and vulnerabilities.


Here, DLR contributes mainly by providing satellite Earth observation data and scientific analyses. DLR and UNU have worked together on numerous projects over the last 10 years – including the German Indonesian Tsunami Early Warning System ([GITEWS](#)) project. GITEWS is an early warning system off the coast of Indonesia, which was developed after the catastrophic seaquake on Christmas of 2004,” Wörner explained: “It is our goal to noticeably and tangibly enhance the social benefits that Earth observation data can offer.”

“As the academic arm of the United Nations, UNU is tasked with developing sustainable solutions to pressing global challenges. In order to do so, we rely on many different kinds of data and information. We are able to generate some of the information by ourselves, for example through interviewing affected household members or conducting focus group interviews. Very often, we do however combine our data with information from other sources, such as the data derived from satellite systems. It is in these cases that the cooperation with DLR is invaluable for us, said Rhyner.

DLR and UNU expect that their agreement will result in even closer ties between science and practice, additional joint projects in the field of Earth observation and climate change as well as sustainable resource protection. The two organizations will also collaborate on satellite communication and navigation, with the goal of increasing knowledge and knowledge transfer. This may also include exchange programmes for experts and the joint supervision of PhD and Master students. The German Remote Sensing Data Center (Deutsche Fernerkundungsdatenzentrum; DFD) at DLR is already cooperating with some of UNU’s PhD students. Just recently, DLR and UNU submitted a joint proposal for the water and land management project CATCH-MEKONG.

The agreement between the two organisations will run initially for a period of five years.

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