

Thank you Ms/ Mr Chair

Distinguished members,

I am really honoured to take the floor on behalf of Eurisy as President.

Some of you may know Eurisy – we are an association of space agencies working mostly in Europe to bridge space and society. We do this by going off beaten tracks to raise awareness of the benefits of space in sectors other than space, and among professional user communities unfamiliar with space.

Why is this important? Why must we reach out to communities unfamiliar with space?

Because so far communication about space applications has been too technical and **failed** to explain the benefits of space to society in general, and especially to non-users! The result is that today most SMEs, Public Authorities and politicians at local, regional and even at a national level don't know that space and particularly space applications can be used by companies and by public administrations!

Worse they think it's very expensive and irrelevant for their needs! Despite the fact that they use space applications in their daily lives, they ignore it! Amazing!

I'm not a space expert, I'm a politician. I had a long career working on several topics, I will not mention it. Space is an addition to my portfolio, thanks to roles such as President of the European Interparliamentary Space Committee and of the Space group at the Belgian Senate.

So I can speak **both** from Eurisy's work with end-users across Europe, **and from my own** experience when I say that any message about the benefits of space, must extend **far beyond** the space community in order to reach these end-users.

We must adopt a new approach to making space more accessible to decision-makers and to the public. We must make **clear the case for space** with users outside this congregation. Citizens should **not think** that space is limited to the exploration of new planets and satellites launching.

It entails that we must **first** learn about the challenges the users face, about their own context. **Only then** can

we make the case for space — by insisting on the difference it makes for the users and its practical benefits. Technology push works in a research environment; but when it comes to moving to an operational stage, we must create user pull for these technologies.

Easier said than done! But successes – those significant, worthy ones — **never** come easy. It is what Eurisy has been learning every step of the way as we have been knocking on closed doors to **open** them to the dialogue with non-space stakeholders.

More door-knocking is needed. We, the space community, need to do this with enthusiasm, with conviction, but also with realism about the fact that space is, for the users, one topic **among many other topics**, some of which may seem to them as more relevant.

I will give you an example of concrete implementation: Eurisy's next conference in Belfast, this 27 June will gather health professionals and healthcare experts. First, they will introduce themselves, and the challenges they face in carrying out their jobs. Second, experienced end-users, and space professionals will

make the case for how space can and **already** makes a difference to their profession: it's about allowing remote communities to consult with medical doctors, or the elderly to be autonomous for longer — a serious challenge for the coming years...

It's one of many activities Eurisy carries out with user communities in order get them involved in the innovation process and excited about it. Space is more than just an inspiration for the future. It is **here** already today, interwoven in our lives.

And **making the case for space with end-users** is also what it takes to make sure that space occupies **its rightful place** on the political agenda: not only as a separate topic, but **in conjunction** with the societal challenges it helps solve and **showing its impact and value** for society.

A final word about a topic that is dear to me, as Chair of YouSpace, an NGO that helps prepare the future generations of space professionals.

Let us not underestimated the role of our students: the future professionals, the tomorrow's workforce. They will by definition have to be able to encompass a range of cross-cutting topics in their future jobs, they

represent an important vector of conviction. We must be particularly attentive that as early as in their university years students should be made aware of emergent space applications and of the solutions they offer **in many different sectors**. Because they will become **the most effective** advocates for space in their future profession!

My conclusion:

If the users communities are convinced of the **solutions** that space technology offers them, if they become the actors of innovation themselves, then we will succeed in anchoring space in those sectors where it can be developed and offers a lot of solutions.

We are entering a new era of space, one in which politicians, administrations, companies and citizens should have an active role! Lets' change our communication, our messages, our language! Let's speak about benefits, returns on investment, services from space: those are the arguments they will recognize!

Just remember: the space community, **all of us**, must be the one walking the **extra** mile towards users in

society. Because the space community **cannot act in isolation!**

Thank you Mister President.