Mister/Madam Moderator,
Honourable Delegates,

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

It is a matter of fact, today, that space technology can bring benefits in many ways to many different areas of society. This is particularly true when we think about the sustainable development goals, the Agenda 2030 and what space can do for developing and developed countries and there is still a lot to do!

We are today observing a shift in both the space sector and non-space sectors: the sustainable development mechanisms are starting to include more and more space applications putting the focus on the users and their needs. But there are still obstacles that must to be overcome.

Eurisy, an association of space agencies working in Europe to bridge space and society, fully endorses the Sustainable Development Goals and uses them as a guide when considering the needs of user communities.

Over the last decade, Eurisy has concentrated on matching the growing capability of the space sector in providing solutions to issues expressed by different sections of the community. While many of these applications are truly innovative and impressive, we acknowledge that there are barriers and obstacles that we need to overcome to inform users that space can assist them in their daily activities and daily activities.

As some of you may know since 2016 Eurisy is actively working, among others, in the field of Search and Rescue in the Alpine region.

Why the Alpine region?

Even if it seems that this is an area not relevant in this context, it highlights that there is one primary issue that must be solved in both developing and developed countries: connectivity.

Why? There is a problem with connectivity?

The lack of connectivity is one of the biggest problems today.
All of us at this moment have a wifi signal on our phone and laptop = You are far away from your home but you are always connected. Nevertheless, in many countries, this is not possible. And maybe some of you can say: "Yes, it's true in my Region, my Country we have a lot of problems of connectivity!".

Information and communication technology is taking on a central role in helping the fulfilment of developmental challenges. The digitalisation of the world is showing us the existence of cost-effective solutions that can accelerate economic and social growth.

Improving the access to connectivity might be a priority for all of us. The example of the Alpine region and the example of Search and Rescue activities in the area is Improving the access to connectivity might be a priority for all of us to understand that without connectivity the life-saving services are highly compromised. It's of course true in the mountains, in the sea but also in rural areas.

We took the example of life-saving services but the relevance of connectivity is of course also related to the access to services and applications, that would help to solve user needs.

We need to focus more on user needs.
We need to focus more on the downstream sector.

Most of the resources allocated by governments to the space sector are mostly for the upstream part. Only recently are Space Agencies starting to focus more on the downstream sector. In Europe, we have an enlightening example: the two EU programmes: Galileo and Copernicus. Both have been created to improve the life of citizens while stimulating the growth of the downstream industry to bring value to society.

But today the attention on what space can do for society is still too limited. Why?

Because space is still seen as pure science and too far from us, while too complicated to be explained. This creates for users, as well as for the policymakers and politicians, a lack of knowledge, a lack of expertise and consequently of dedicated policies and measures.

This explains us the gap in the communication between politicians, policy makers, service providers and users. It's not a confidence, I made politics during 27 years & I was Belgian Senator, I can tell you that this question is essential!! And this gap needs to be closed!

But what can do Eurisy to help to reduce this gap and facilitate the dialogue between space and non-space actors?

Our goal is to shed a light on these challenges to the successful uptake of satellite services. Recognising the existence of this gap in communication, allows us to work hard to guarantee the dialogue between users and service providers.

This dialogue aims at matching users' needs with space capabilities of service providers through a two-way flow of information among actors.

We must invite the politicians to think out of the box and interest them to help better public-sector procurement policies.

Space is not only inspiration. Space is not acting in isolation! Space is an important tool for the society that needs to be integrated with other technologies in a cross-sectoral view.

My conclusion,

We all need to adopt a new approach to make space accessible and comprehensible to everyone.

We need new communication tools. We need to let the user communities to understand that space is not a closed sector. We need to move from a technology push approach to a user pull one.

Only adopting a new way of communication, listening to the needs of society and pushing for more investments for the downstream sector, we will be able to really help society in improving.

If we will be able to start listening more to the users, if we will be able to adapt our communication, then then we will be able to really create a bridge with society.

Only in this way, we can admit that we are part of sustainable development mechanisms.

I thank you.