

Beijing Declaration

The twenty-first ISPRS Congress of ISPRS took place in Beijing from 3-11 July, bringing together scientists, users and managers of geospatial data to discuss developments and examine the contribution geospatial data can make to future society. One major output from the congress was the 'Beijing Declaration', approved by delegates representing 41 countries at the General Assembly and announced at a press conference on 11th July attended by former minister of Science and Technology of China, Xu Guanhua and some thirty members of the Chinese press.

The Declaration is a formal statement of the ISPRS mission to promote the peaceful use of geo-spatial technology for the benefit of society and the environment. It also sets out a number of ways in which the ISPRS can work to this end. The Declaration calls on international communities to commit adequate investment for scientific research and development, education and training, and capacity and infrastructure building. It asks that the sharing of research and technology for peaceful applications be promoted, and constructive dialogue and co-operation between scientists, governments, public and private sectors, NGOs and international organisations be encouraged.

The Declaration draws attention to the wide application of earth-observation technologies in fields such as socio-economic sustainable development and natural-disaster prediction, mitigation and response. Other fields include maintenance of biodiversity, cultural heritage conservation, global and environmental climate-change monitoring, energy exploration and management, land-use and land-cover inventory and food security. Also mentioned is sustainable use of water resources, and human habitat, environment and health.

The document further points out significant technological achievements in the acquisition and analysis of aerial and satellite imagery, advances in airborne and terrestrial Lidar and developments in imaging radar technology. It highlights the increased maturity of small satellites, geo-sensor networks, digital cameras and other types of sensor. Advances have also been made in automated information extraction, distributed data processing and multidimensional data modelling.

New forms of co-operation and knowledge sharing have emerged, most notably the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) and its programme for establishing a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The importance of the International Council for Science (ICSU) Geo-Unions and the Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies is also stressed.

The Declaration affirms the importance of photogrammetry, remote-sensing and spatial-information sciences for sustainable development in the twenty-first century. It recognised the responsibility of non-governmental organisations, especially the ISPRS, in promoting the peaceful use of space, airborne and terrestrial technology. The document further reaffirms ISPRS commitment to realising the full potential of information from imagery through research and development, scientific networking, international co-operation, inter-disciplinary integration and education and training. It also highlights the importance of raising public awareness regarding photogrammetry, remote sensing and the spatial-information sciences.

ISPRS will be distributing the Declaration widely and seeking support from other organisations concerned with geospatial data.