

CONFERENCE ON SPACE LAW AND SPACE APPLICATIONS  
FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION  
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**Keynote Address**

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Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It was only a short moment ago that I had the honour to pronounce the Opening Address of the Rector Magnificus of Rangsit University, Dr. Arthit Urairat, on this auspicious occasion, the double honours conferred upon me by an irresistible invitation to present a keynote address on Space Law and the Uses of Space for Disaster Management in the same opening ceremony can only be interpreted as a mark of implicit confidence that the organizers of this historic Conference have placed upon one single person. With such a responsible trust, I shall endeavour to do my utmost not to bore Distinguished Participants with repetitious assertions or recurring tales of untold episodes of international experience.

Nonetheless, I feel it my primary duty to recall what I myself observed last year as a keynote speaker for the Space Law Conference in Bangkok on "Asian Cooperation in Space Activities: A Common Approach to Legal Matters." Indeed, I had occasion to remind Distinguished Participants of the Space Law Conference in 2006 of a vivid dream that I used to have some fifty years earlier of the resurgence of Asian nations reunited in their collective efforts in earnest and active cooperation in all fields of human activities.

I am now enjoying the sight of the living realities of positive and fruitful cooperation among the Nations of South-East, South and East Asia as well as the Pacific, living together in peace and in purposeful pursuits of wealth and happiness, free of foreign interference and unencumbered by extraneous forces, an ideal situation that could scarcely have been envisioned in the middle of the twentieth century. It was then an ideal that merely existed in my personal dreamland. But today, we have been awakened to the exciting realities of truly meaningful concrete cooperation.

A decade and a half ago, we in the Asian Pacific Region could only dream of a more equitable distribution of the benefits of the exploitation of outer space in Asia. To day, Asian nations and entities are not only active operators of space activities but also significant service providers in various fields of space exploration and exploitation, information and telecommunication technology, direct broadcasting and remote sensing through Asian satellite networks. For the Asian Pacific Region and indeed beyond, embracing the Indian Ocean with Asian and African partners, anyone can detect closer cooperation and definite progress currently on the rise.

As responsible members of free nations, the peoples of Asia and the Pacific are free to do as they consider appropriate, and they have felt the natural urge to

cooperate. This is based clearly on the instinctive and spontaneous obligation to cooperate with their neighbours. The duty to cooperate is not only a legal duty, but it is being consistently implemented in practice in our regions of the world. We in Asia and the Pacific are enjoying the benefits of such practical and selfless cooperation.

In the two days ahead, a roadmap has been carefully and skillfully prepared for our deliberation. Distinguished Participants will have occasions to learn more about the facts, situations and events occurring in our regions and possibly beyond, to observe and appreciate the need for preparedness, the usefulness of mutual cooperation and the values of friendly advice and counsel from within the region and from outside. Learning from past experience, we can build a better and more secured future, avoiding unnecessary losses of lives and properties and mitigating potential hazards and resulting disasters, with a realistic legal framework and proper appreciation of the status of the prevailing rules in operation. We will also learn about the Role of the United Nations and other affiliated bodies as well as the contributions of non-governmental organizations in relief works and rehabilitation for all types of disasters, natural and man-made, including notably earthquake, drought, flood, cyclone, hurricane, mud slide as well as oil pollution. Regional cooperation remains our constant theme, and we will have occasions to observe the progressive development of international law on State Responsibility in the context of Humanitarian Assistance, other than armed intervention. The Conference will close with the concluding summaries of our deliberations by the principal organizers of the Conference. In this connection, a word of appreciation is in order for the thoughtful and considerate preparation for the work of the Conference

by Professor Nipant Chitasombat of Rangsit University and Mrs. Tanja Masson-Zwaan, President-Elect of the International Institute of Space Law (IISL).

As I myself will have another opportunity to present a paper on one substantive topic, there is no need for me to elaborate further, nor to repeat what is in the offing. Suffice it for me to emphasize once more the need and actual practice of meaningful cooperation in our region. There is nothing more sacrosanct than the duty to cooperate, as a principle of international law, generally recognized by all free nations, large and small.

Before closing this brief address, may I add how delighted I am to have come across familiar faces, like Professor Peter Malanczuk, Professor Paul Larsen, and Professor Setsuko Aoki, and thereby to be able to renew our collective labour. On the other hand, there is an apparent upsurge of "New Bloods" that cannot fail to escape notice. I would like to crave the indulgence of older generations at this Conference to lend me their hands in the preparation for younger and succeeding generations a solid groundwork on which to construct a common edifice that can stand the test of time, so that those who come after us, would never need to start from scratch. Our joint and collective efforts should not go to waste. Those coming after us could continue to build on the solid foundations we have initiated for them, and for future generations to come. Let this be an inter-generational legacy that we can proudly leave behind for the foreseeable future.

Chiangmai, 21 November 2007