



Introductory Remarks. Monday 26th October 2009

By the Chairman of EISC Ian Taylor MP:

Space as a Problem Solver

Those of us with an interest in 'Space' might be regarded as eccentric by some, or as visionary intellectuals, scientists and engineers by others. But whatever else we are, we know that space is both exciting and practical.

At present, missions involving the European Space Agency and other space agencies are probing our universe, the sun and the outer galaxy. We are searching for the origin of life, for earth-like planets and for signs of life-sustaining resources. We are training the next generation of astronauts. We are seeking to learn what happens on the sun and in the great voids to impact on our planet's atmospheres. We are using satellites for observing earth itself, communicating with each other, viewing television pictures, finding how to navigate, where to plant crops, how to discover oil, relaying tele-medicine to remote communities, improving ways to deal with natural and man-made disasters, monitoring the impact of climate change and so many other applications.

Space can inspire young people to want to be scientists and engineers. Upstream and downstream application of satellite technology unleashes innovation, growth, knowledge and wealth creation.

Space can also show that we are all in this together – that national boundaries may be important to us as politicians, but that increasingly problems are beyond the capacity of any one government to solve alone. So collaboration and co-operation are vital to our future, not only in technologies but in the information derived from their deployment. Investment in space leads to benefits for all.

So welcome to all the delegations to the EISC and the other organisations which are participating. Our conference has an important role to play in highlighting the benefits of investment in space activities. And, as we emerge from an economic recession, we have an opportunity to demonstrate that Space can be a problem solver. Both in the public and private sectors, space can assist in delivering policies and objectives in ways that are not always possible or feasible or affordable by terrestrial means. Increasingly, public/private partnerships can lead to access to capital through debt and equity investment markets to deepen and extend the drive for technological progress beyond dependency on the taxpayer alone.

For this conference, we have pulled together a collection of space solutions to which all members have contributed. I commend the brochure which is being made available. I express my gratitude to our sponsors for their essential support and to the organisers for their efforts.

This is the tenth anniversary of the first EISC. We have come a long way since that first conference in Paris in 1999, when the Parliamentary groups of France, Germany, Italy and the UK joined together to create the EISC. We are now a ten strong team, with observers from not only the European Space Agency but also now the European Commission. Others join us from further afield to broaden our horizons and expertise. I should also pay tribute to the support the EISC has long enjoyed from other institutions, including the Western European Union, the European Parliament, Eurospace, and of course the longstanding backing of the European space industry.

So, ten years on, this is a good time to look forward, and ask where do we want to take the EISC? That is why we have set aside considerable time tomorrow morning to debate the future direction of EISC. We all know that Parliamentarians like nothing more than a good debate, so let us focus on where we want take this organisation.

But let us be clear, the EISC plays a vital role. This is our platform to debate amongst Parliamentarians from the leading nations in Europe what direction we want Europe to take in Space activity. And what better time to discuss the future direction of Europe in Space than in these closing hours of the debate over the Lisbon Treaty. Because as we all know, this Treaty, if ratified, will finally give the European Union for the first time a clear mandate to develop a European space policy together with the member states. The EU will then, just like its national governments, find that space is a problem solver.

We have an opportunity, together, to help shape the EISC as an effective partner in framing decisions about the next phase in European space policies.

So above all, let us celebrate our interest in space as Parliamentarians – and show that we are also hard-headed rather than only having heads in and beyond the clouds.

Ian Taylor MP