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Pre-Recorded Keynote Speech at the
ASEAN Space Situational Awareness (SSA) and Space Traffic
Management (STM) Seminar
12 March 2026, Manila, the Philippines

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at the ASEAN Space Situational Awareness and Space Traffic Management Seminar here in Manila. I want to acknowledge the Philippine Space Agency, the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency of Thailand — both representing the ASEAN COSTI Subcommittee on Earth, Ocean and Space Science — and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs for bringing this conversation together. I also want to recognise our international partners from the public and private sectors who are participating in this work.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The orbital environment surrounding Earth looks nothing like it did a generation ago. More than 36,000 large pieces of debris are circling the planet at extreme velocities. Alongside them: roughly one million coin-sized fragments and over 130 million tiny shards — each one capable of destroying an operational satellite.

The volume of active satellites has nearly doubled in just a few years — from 7,500 in 2023 to over 14,000, today. Space controllers now issue thousands of collision warnings every day, each one potentially triggering evasive manoeuvres. Annual launches, which numbered only in the hundreds during the early decades of spaceflight, now run into the thousands. This is not a trajectory that stabilises on its own.

Just last month, Earth was struck by one of the most powerful solar storms in recent memory — an event with the capacity to knock satellites off course, disrupt global communications, trigger radio blackouts, and cause power outages, on the ground.

What happens in orbit does not stay in orbit. For ASEAN — a region whose economies, disaster response systems, aviation, shipping, and digital connectivity are deeply dependent on space-based services — the stakes are direct and concrete.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN is home to 684 million people and absorbs nearly 40% of the world's natural disasters. In that context, real-time satellite data is not a technical convenience — it is infrastructure that saves lives. The Cospas-Sarsat system, supported by around 65 satellites, has already rescued more than 64,000 people.

ASEAN's own Disaster Monitoring and Response System, used by the AHA Centre, draws on satellite data for hazard tracking and hydrometeorological monitoring in support of disaster planning, response, and recovery. Satellites also underpin the connectivity that links remote communities and secures the sea and air corridors this region depends on. Space Situational Awareness and Space Traffic Management are necessary for keeping these systems operational.

Without effective SSA, we have no reliable picture of what is moving above us. Without optimised STM, we cannot prevent collisions that would degrade or destroy that picture entirely. The question this seminar must grapple with is not whether ASEAN needs to act, but whether we act now with purpose or later under pressure.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN's engagement with space technology is not new. The ASEAN COSTI Sub-Committee on Space Technology and Applications — SCOSA — has been coordinating regional efforts since 1999. The foundation is there. What has changed is the scale of ambition now being formalised.

First, space technology and its applications have been declared a regional priority under the ASEAN Plan of Action on Science, Technology and Innovation 2026–2035, and embedded as a strategic measure in the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026–2030.

This policy alignment matters: it signals that space capabilities are being treated as a driver of resilience and competitiveness. It is also consistent with ASEAN's broader ambition to become the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030 under the ASEAN Community Vision 2045.

Second, the ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation has this year streamlined three of its sub-committees — covering Space Technology and Applications, Meteorology and Geophysics, and Marine Science — into a single integrated platform: the Sub-Committee on Earth, Ocean and Space Science, or SC-EOSS. The intent is to strengthen coordination across these disciplines. This restructuring is expected to receive ministerial endorsement at the 22nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on STI in June.

SC-EOSS will be supported by four ASEAN Centres: the ASEAN Research and Training Centre for Space Technology and Applications; the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre; the ASEAN Earthquake Information Centre; and the ASEAN Weather Modification Centre — advancing ASEAN's earth, ocean and space science agenda in tandem.

Third, under the ASEAN–India Space Cooperation Programme, a telemetry, tracking and command station is being established in Biak, Indonesia, and a satellite data reception and processing facility is under development in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. When completed in 2029, they will materially improve regional capacity for space data sharing across disaster management, environmental monitoring, and sustainable development.

Fourth, ASEAN Member States are also scaling up investment across the space value chain. Southeast Asia's space economy is projected to generate up to USD 100 billion in GDP impact by 2030. ASEAN is also developing the world's first regional digital economy agreement — the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement — with a projected USD 2 trillion digital economy in view by 2030. Space-based services are foundational to that vision: satellite communications, navigation, and Earth observation underpin the infrastructure that agreement is designed to unlock. DEFA's emphasis on interoperable infrastructure and harmonised data governance also has direct implications for real-time tracking and predictive analytics in STM.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As ASEAN's space capabilities mature, the ambition must be matched with stewardship. This is what makes the anticipated ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Space Cooperation the most consequential commitment in this domain this year. It will formalise our collective intent to pursue responsible, secure, and forward-looking space governance. I commend the Philippines, as ASEAN Chair, for driving this initiative forward.

The global space economy is on course to reach USD 1 trillion within the next decade. However, space governance has not kept pace. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty established broad principles for the peaceful use and exploration of space, but there is still no globally binding STM regime.

There are no universally agreed rules of the road in orbit. In navigating that gap, ASEAN must draw on what its Charter already affirms: multilateralism, dialogue, and peaceful cooperation. These principles must now extend beyond Earth.

The task before us is to map ASEAN's capabilities, strengthen real-time data sharing, and translate that work into a concrete regional SSA and STM framework — one whose outcomes directly inform the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Space Cooperation at this year's Summit.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Orbital traffic is multiplying. The decisions made in this decade will determine whether space remains a shared global common or becomes an unmanaged liability. In 1968, during the Apollo 8 mission, astronaut William Anders captured a photograph that has since become one of the defining images of the space age: the Earth rising above the Moon's horizon.

Anders later reflected that they had travelled to explore the Moon — but what truly captured their attention was the Earth itself. That image revealed our planet for what it is: a small, fragile sphere set against the vastness of space. Today, an ever-growing network of satellites orbits that same sphere, quietly sustaining the communications, navigation, disaster monitoring, and connectivity on which our societies depend.

Ensuring that the space environment around it remains safe, stable, and sustainable is therefore a responsibility we share. By engaging constructively on space situational awareness and space traffic management now, ASEAN has the opportunity not only to participate in shaping the future of space governance — but to help ensure that the space above our shared home remains usable for generations to come.

Thank you.
