European space policy: medium and long-term future use of space. Green Paper

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PURPOSE : to present the Green Paper on European Space Policy. CONTENT : this paper, prepared by the Commission in co-operation with the European Space Agency (ESA), looks into Europe's assets and weaknesses in this sector. It's main aim is to initiate a large-scale consultation process principally meant to: - meet the request from the European Parliament, inviting the Commission to prepare a White Paper on the future of Europe in space; - further evolve and strengthen European space policy; - facilitate the use of space in implementing European policies; - foster the development of a political position on the strategic role of space for Europe and raise awareness among citizens; - address remaining politically sensitive issues such as security, multiple use and certain institutional matters. As a basis for a broad consultation, the report tackles key issues such as the EU's independent access to space, scientific excellence in this field, the industrial and technological base, relevant markets, human resources, the legal and institutional framework, international co-operation, and environmental and security aspects. It aims to launch a debate with all players - national and international organisations, the EU space industry and users, scientific community and citizens. Over the last few decades, space policy has been managed at national and intergovernmental level. The European Space Agency, with its unique knowledge base, has played a leading co-ordination role in Europe's successful efforts to consolidate its industrial base and achieve technological independence. It has provided Europe with its present capacities in the area of launchers and platforms, turning it into a leading world player in a highly competitive commercial field. The Green Paper states that space has become a crucial component for implementing European objectives and policies, notably sustainable development, environmental protection, transport and mobility and the information society. Space applications also provide answers to emerging security needs, with both civilian and defence aspects encompassed by the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The Galileo project and the GMES (Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security) initiative illustrate this new approach and underline the need for an enhanced role for the Union in space matters. They show how industrial and technological successes achieved by ESA can be maximised through joint space initiatives. This is especially the case when the European Commission has gradually developed solid expertise through its research programmes notably, applications for sustainable development and, more recently, the security of citizens, in addition to its political initiative and regulatory and negotiating functions. For instance, the Commission has developed effective satellite-based environmental monitoring systems, to detect and help prevent offshore oil spills and other hazards. Another example of EU-sponsored space projects concerns satellite mapping of remote regions, such as in Afghanistan, where EU aid and rescue teams have been able to reach isolated villages in the aftermath of the 2001 earthquake thanks to accurate satellitepositioning and mapping services. Space technology can also offer cost effective infrastructure solutions for large geographical areas; all European citizens, including those from the new Member States, will be able to enjoy high quality services should the EU implement new broad-band space-based systems. It is therefore logical to raise the possibility of integrating space into Union competence. This would open up the elaboration of a Space Programme enabling an efficient EU action in the space domain, including a vast range of new applications for industry and citizens. The Programme could also make the most of available resources from the public and private sectors. This would also help clarify a number of pending organisational and institutional issues, and add strong focus and clear political backing to space activities. While it is clear that no single Member State has the ability to support an independent national space policy, integrating space policy into Union competence poses a number of complex and sensitive questions. The role of the Green Paper is therefore to launch an in-depth debate involving all parties. Its objective is to increase general awareness of the strategic importance of space and space policy for the Union and its citizens, to define areas of consensus, and to find concrete answers to questions concerning access, funding, and institutional arrangements. The consultation will run from 22 January to 30 May 2003. It will be managed

by the Commission/ESA Joint Task Force on space, which will organise a series of seminars, workshops and hearings throughout Europe to foster the debate. Contributions can also be presented online through a dedicated Web Forum. On the basis of responses received from all interested parties, a White Paper will be drafted by the Commission and published later in the year, putting forward concrete proposals in an Action Plan.