



## **Greetings and Opening**

**At the occasion of the UNSDI GLOBAL PARTNERS MEETING**

**ESRIN, 1 March**

**Dr. Volker Liebig**

I am very pleased to welcome all of you here at ESRIN, the Italian Centre of the European Space Agency. I welcome you both in my function as Head of ESRIN and as Director of the ESA Earth Observation Programmes.

Earth observation is the order of the day, and this notion is no coincidence. Only a few weeks ago, the UN IPCC published the first of three parts of the 4<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Assessment Report; whereas the models and predictions of global change themselves do not substantially differ from the last report of 2001, the *certainty* of the predictions has grown strong. The recently published STERN report, an evaluation of economic consequences, calls the climate change the “*greatest and widest ranging market failure ever seen*”.

Another important observation concerns the shift from pure science to what can be called operational science and applications. The fields for using Earth observation data and products are vast, ranging from disaster relief to resource management. Such, the *use* of Outer Space, beside its exploration the main reason of human space activities as mentioned by the UN Outer Space Treaty, has become one of the most valuable assets the space age has brought.

Cooperation between the UN and ESA looks back on some history already. The many application projects we are running in cooperation or partnership with the United Nations, covering manifold topics from water management to epidemiology, clearly shows that Earth observation, here in ESA and in general, is not only about science and technology, but about *managing our planet and society*. The more data we get from our satellites and from airborne or in-situ resources, the more important are effective, networked data infrastructures. For bringing the benefit of Earth observation to the people, daily and globally, we shall further coordinate and intensify our efforts in harmonising data access and management.

With pleasure I open therefore this meeting, hoping that the discussion you have here at ESRIN, in the almost “Arcadian” surrounding of the Roman hillside, will be productive and fruitful.

Thank you.