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Space Generation Congress 2009

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by Christine Hill, Emil Nathanson and Andreas Fink



At the Space Generation Congress 2009

The 10th Space Generation Congress (SGC) took place in Daejeon, South Korea on 8–10 October 2009. The venue was the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), which is the largest university in South Korea. We, Christine Hill, Emil Nathanson and Andreas Fink, were able to attend this outstanding and inspiring event thanks to generous scholarships from the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR).

The first day started with a welcome from the Joint Chairs of the Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC), Ben Baseley-Walker and Agnieszka Lukaszczyk. After that, a short overview of the organisation, as well as the main activities of SGAC, was given by Ariane Cornell, Executive Director of SGAC. Alex Karl, Project Coordinator, briefed us on the structures, outlines, purposes and schedules of the five SGC 2009 projects, Agency, Industry, Climate, Exploration and Peace.

Between the session working times, we had the opportunity to meet J. R. Edwards and his team from Lockheed Martin. Mr Edwards presented a viewpoint on the challenges of space industry, focusing on space workforce, while his colleagues, David McReavy and Kat Coderre gave a presentation on the Orion project. In between, we had an impressive traditional Korean lunch, sponsored by KAIST and attended by the Dean of KAIST School of Engineering, Seung O Park. The first day ended with a cultural evening, when everyone had the opportunity to present his or her culture to the group.

The second day began with a presentation on 'The role of small satellite programs in building national space technology' by Soon D. Choi, Professor Emeritus at KAIST and Founding Director of the Satellite Research Technology Center (SaTReC). After his presentation, Professor Choi himself took the SGC delegates on a tour of the Satellite Research Center. Afterwards, KAIST students gave an introduction to the Annual International Conference on Integration of Science and Technology, ICISTIS-KAIST. The second speaker, Ray Williamson, the President of Secure World Foundation, presented a general view on issues related to space debris. Then, Ambassador Ciro Arévalo, the Chair of the United Nations Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UN COPUOS) and long-term supporter of SGAC, gave an inspirational speech sharing his experiences and ideas, along with several important recommendations for SGAC.

The last speaker of the second day was Jim Zimmerman, President of the International Space Services, Inc. and former President of the International Astronautical Federation (IAF), who gave a general description of the IAF's member organisations, and defined the six focus areas of IAF. After the group discussions, SGAC delegates had a tour of the Expo Park, and participated in the Space Festival Opening Ceremony, which aims to raise space activities awareness among the people living in the city of Daejeon.

Presentation by winner of '2009 SGAC Move an Asteroid' competition

The major events on the third and final day were the project team group presentations. These presentations gave direct insight into the thoughts of the next generation that will lead global space activities and thus the direction of future global space policy. One of the day's highlights was the presentation by Sini Merikallio, winner of the '2009 SGAC Move an Asteroid' competition. Ms Merikallio passionately presented her winning idea of using electric solar sails to redirect objects that may impact Earth. Afterwards, Jim Miller, Senior GPS Technologist at NASA, described the satellite navigation program at NASA, the top-level requirements and the nature of national and international collaboration. Also from NASA, Dennis Stone, President of World Space Week, introduced conference delegates to the NASA Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS) project and some of the different commercial companies involved in it. Prof. Dr Berndt Feuerbacher, the current President of the IAF, outlined the history of space exploration and how it widens humanity's horizons and brings new perspectives. Prof. Feuerbacher explained the past milestones of space flight endeavours and the future challenges.

The conference ended with a formal dinner sponsored by the Korean Aerospace Research Institute (KARI). During the dinner, Dr Chris Boshuizen of NASA Ames Research Center highlighted the passion, enthusiasm and amazing network that SGAC offers its members and conference attendees.

Rewarding experience

The most impressive aspect of the congress for us was the people and the atmosphere, with different national and cultural backgrounds but without any conflicts. Although working in an international multidisciplinary team was sometimes challenging, it was also the most rewarding experience. There were a lot of different opinions, which were influenced by the cultural backgrounds of the individual team members. Yet people were always friendly and helpful and it was inspiring to see how much can be accomplished in such a short time, if everybody is working towards the same goal. You could really feel the spirit of the 'Space Generation'. We are very happy that we had the opportunity to participate in the SGC and to be part of the Space Generation family.

We would like to thank DLR and SGAC. Without their support, our journey to South Korea would not have been possible. We would also like to thank all the SGC staff members who organised this great congress and all the participants who made this event such a memorable experience.

Related Contacts

Corporate Communications

Tel: +49 2203 601-2116

Fax: +49 2203 601-3249

E-Mail: kommunikation@dlr.de

Dr. Volker Kratzenberg-Annies

Education, Outreach

Tel: +49 2203 601-3930

E-Mail: VOLKER.KRATZENBERG-ANNIES@DLR.DE

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