Fourteenth Session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF-14)

Space Education and Awareness Working Group

Concept Paper

Space permeates many aspects of human activities today. It has also been an important part of human civilizations. Throughout the human history, the quest for knowledge of the universe has guided humankind to know more about its past, present and future, and to expand its imagination about where it came from and where it is going.

During the first fifty years of the Space Age, dawned by the successful launch of Sputnik-1, space has increasingly become an essential, integral part of our daily lives. Benefits of space science and technology and their applications have enhanced safety, security, predictability, responsiveness, stability and convenience at the societal level. Images from and information on various parts of the Earth provided by Earth observation satellites to assist in the management of natural resources, disasters and environment as well as means provided by communications satellites to enable faster exchange of voluminous information around the world present only a few examples of how space applications brought practical benefits to support the development of our society.

In spite of the growing evidences of the usefulness of space science and technology for the society, the level of appreciation of their importance by the general public and policy makers is still limited. Efforts must be strengthened to increase awareness of the usefulness and importance of space science and technology and their applications to enhance the quality of our lives and to support sustainable development of our society.

It is equally important that the young generations also realize that we live in the society that greatly benefits from the advancement of space science and technology and their various applications. Especially for young people, space activities provide more than useful and important tools and information for the society. They serve as the source of interest, imagination and inspiration. Attractive space materials can be effectively used to spark intellectual flame in the minds of young people not only in science and technology but also in many other aspects of human activities. Effectively used, examples of the past achievements and efforts to overcome challenges in the use and exploration of outer space can motivate young people to pursue excellence in whatever they do and can guide them to appreciate the power of collective efforts made toward common goals.

Some people in various countries are aware of such positive impact of space subjects and materials on the minds of young people. However, many of them are making isolated efforts and struggling to effectively use space materials in their educational activities to help young people pursue their dreams, and motivate them to make their dreams come true. If sufficiently provided with appropriate skills, knowledge and materials, and if supported and motivated by the coalition of like-minded individuals across the borders, those people could, together, bring enlightenment to the minds of an enormous population of young people. Efforts should be strengthened to provide more training opportunities, teaching materials and support systems to teachers, educators and leaders of children's groups to use attractive space materials to enhance education for young people, at home, at school and in the community.

It is with such conviction that the Space Education and Awareness Working Group was established to address issues relating to: i) the use of space materials to enhance education for young people; ii) education and training opportunities for young people in the fields of space science and technology; and iii) efforts to increase public awareness of the societal benefits and importance of space activities.

Starting from its meeting during APRSAF-11 in 2003, the Working Group has begun to identify concrete actions to address those issues. Within the framework of APRSAF, the Working Group has organized since 2004 the following activities to date based on its recommendations: i) APRSAF Water Rocket Event (2005 and 2006); ii) APRSAF Poster Contest (2006); iii) APRSAF Space Education Forum and Seminar (twice in 2006); iv) International CanSat Seminar (2007).

It is hoped that the work of the Working Group, through educational and awareness increase activities, would eventually result in enhancing individual human development of young people in the region of Asia and the Pacific and in increasing public recognition of the essential role that space activities plays in the enhancement of the society, and human civilizations, in various manners. It is hoped that a network of education and awareness efforts to be made and expanded in the region through space activities would eventually lay the foundation of lasting peace and harmony among the peoples in the region.

<Note: For the work of the Working Group to be conducted during APRSAF-14, please refer to "Provisional Agenda" of the Working Group (document APRSAF/SEA-WG/2007/1).>