

FOREWORD



Space assets, particularly Earth observation satellites, are increasingly seen as an important resource for addressing major world problems. These satellites are used to better understand the global environment and monitor its changes. They enable sustainable management of resources, including water, agriculture, fisheries, forests and energy. They increase human security in the event of disasters. In sum, Earth observation by satellite is supporting sustainable human practices on a local, regional and global scale. The range of capabilities offered by Earth observation satellites –and access to them– has progressed rapidly in recent years. Satellites provide data to developed and developing nations, reducing the digital divide and accelerating development. More countries and enterprises are launching and operating additional smaller satellites. Satellite data are being increasingly transformed and merged with other information into timely products and services to meet user needs directly. The number and types of users are also increasing, encompassing governments, enterprises, research institutes and international organizations. In UNESCO, for example, we use satellite images to monitor World Heritage and Man and Biosphere sites, as well as to support actions of disaster management and post-conflict emergency assistance and reconstruction projects.

The first edition of the Athena Global Earth Observation Guide provides, in one document, a comprehensive review of how Earth observation satellites serve civil and commercial needs around the world relating to the environment, resources, disasters and other security issues. Its synoptic vision, clear analysis of emerging trends, opportunities and challenges, and easy reference material at the global, international, regional and national levels, support informed decision making.

The Athena Global Earth Observation Guide should become an important resource for practitioners, users, potential users and policy makers as they grapple with some of the most important global issues facing society today.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marcio Barbosa'.

Marcio Barbosa
Deputy Director-General, UNESCO