

International Interdisciplinary Congress on Space Debris Remediation – 11 12 November 2011

Opening Remarks by Professor Ram Jakhu

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Ram Jakhu, I am an Associate Professor at the McGill Faculty of Law. Along with my team, I will be your host for these two days. Welcome to our Faculty.

I know that you all are very busy people because you are the best in your fields of expertise. Therefore, I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to each and every one of you, especially those who came from faraway places in Australia, China, India and Japan, for your time and effort in coming to Montreal.

As you know well, nowadays there is news almost every week, if not every day, of something falling from the sky. Things are expected to get worse, if nothing is done about the rapid increase in space debris. Consequently, the sustainability of space utilization, even in the medium term, could be in serious jeopardy.

The problems caused by space debris are international in scope and nature, thus they ought to be discussed through international fora, both governmental and academic like this one. At the same time, the problems are complicated as they involve scientific, technical, commercial, military, policy and legal factors. Therefore, the solutions should be sought following an interdisciplinary approach. In my view, interdisci

Thus the sequence of discussion sessions is as follows:

- What is the nature and scope of the problem of space debris?
- What techniques are being proposed to solve the identified problem?
- To what extent are the proposed techniques valid under the existing law?
- How should the best techniques be implemented through decision-making fora and new policies, laws and procedures?

We should keep in mind that the role of law, space debris remediation, will essentially be to render legitimacy and authority (possibly binding) to the technical solutions adopted and practiced.

Following the Chatham House Rule, we will brainstorm over of the next two days. On the basis of discussions and recommendations made here we will produce a report as well as the basic constitutive elements of an international environmental declaration on what should be done with respect to debris remediation and orbit servicing of satellites. The report of the congress will be published, widely distributed and presented at appropriate international fora, including the COPUOS of the United Nations.

This event is organised in collaboration with the Cologne Institute of Air and Space Law, and the International Association for the Advancement of Space Safety. It is cosponsored by the Canadian Space Agency and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. The congress is financially supported by the Erin J. C. Arsenault Trust Fund at McGill University. We are indebted to the Arsenault Foundation, without whose support this meeting would have not taken place.

We will make every effort to make your participation in the congress and stay in Montreal as smooth and enjoyable as possible. However, please keep in mind that there is an ongoing strike by administrative support staff at McGill University. Accordingly, we request for your understanding and cooperation. Please do not hesitate to contact any one of us, should you need any assistance in logistical matters.

Finally, as you know that today is Remembrance Day. Thus at 11.00 we should pause our activities and observe one minute of silence to remember the thousands of men and women who sacrificed their lives for Canada and other peace-loving countries.

Before we start our first session, I request our Director Prof. Brian Dempsey and our Dean Prof. Daniel Jutras to say a few words of welcome to you.

Ram Jakhu
Congress Chair