All systems go for SpaceOps 2021 – Virtual Edition Conference!

Who will be the first humans to land on Mars? How do we keep track of the thousands of objects being launched into orbit by companies all over the world? These are some of the questions that participants of the SpaceOps2021- Virtual Edition conference will try to answer, during the 16th International Space Operations Conference, taking place 3 - 5 May 2021.

This iconic conference focusing on Space Operations, will be hosted by the South African National Space Agency (SANSA). It will be fully virtual, and delegates can participate for free!

Initially, the conference was to be hosted during 2020 in Cape Town South Africa, but these plans were derailed by the global pandemic and Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

“In space there are no lockdowns, therefore, it was important that we continue with the conference irrespective of having a venue and filling up conference rooms”, says Tiaan Strydom, the Chairman of the conference.

“The space industry is constantly evolving and has a lot going on despite the pandemic, but not that the pandemic didn’t have an impact on global space operations. During the conference, in the first plenary session, delegates will have a chance to reflect and discuss the effects of the pandemic on the Space industry,” adds Strydom.

Delegates will discuss current topics gripping the industry from the comfort of their homes or offices.

On day two of the conference for instance, there will be a plenary on the growing industry of commercial ground-stations, such as the ones helmed by Elon Musk’s SpaceX. The session will focus on how government space agencies could work with private ground stations and share resources and expertise in space operations.

Strydom hopes this particular session will spark debate and interest in public-facing space operations such as a return to the moon and landing the first humans on Mars.

Delegates will also discuss space situational awareness on day three. This plenary will consider the technological footprint space agencies and companies have on the amount of spacecraft and debris in earth orbit. “There are a lot of companies now talking about launching 3000 to 50,000 satellites, and all those objects need to be monitored,” says Strydom.

Participants will engage with questions like, “what happens when one of these commercial companies goes out of business?” and, “who would take responsibility for their assets in space.”

Registrations for the conference are still open, and the event is completely free to attend. Visit www.Spaceops2021.org for further details!

About SANSA

The South African National Space Agency (SANSA) came into being in December 2010, but South Africa’s involvement with space research and activities started many decades earlier with helping early international space efforts in the second half of the 20th century, and observing the Earth’s magnetic field at stations around Southern Africa.

SANSA was created to promote the use of space and strengthen cooperation in space-related activities while fostering research in space science, advancing scientific engineering through developing human capital, and supporting industrial development in space technologies.

The research and work carried out at SANSA focuses on space science, engineering and technology that can promote development, build human capital, and provide important national services. Much of this work involves monitoring the Earth and our surrounding environment, and using the collected data to ensure that navigation, communication technology and weather forecasting services function as intended.

SANSA’s Head Office in Pretoria oversees SANSA operations and management the Earth Observation programme (currently based in Hartebeesthoek); the Space Operations programme (formerly the Satellite Application Centre, located in Hartebeesthoek); and the Space Science programme (former Hermanus Magnetic Observatory, located in Hermanus); as well as a newly-established Space Engineering programme situated alongside the Head Office.

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