UNCTAD · WORLD INVESTMENT FORUM 2026 · DOHA · WITH UNOOSA

Investing in Space: The Final Frontier

Session Note · Doha, Qatar · 25 October 2026, afternoon

Background

Space is the industrial opportunity of the 21st century.

Rapidly falling transport costs are making it more accessible to a wider range of economic operators from a broader range of countries, turning it from an adjacent economic sphere to an integrated sphere. This mirrors periods of investment and growth that followed forward leaps in shipping, rail, air and road transport.

The space economy presents many opportunities, some already realised, some yet to be developed, all of which have economic returns and impact on Earth.

For example, satellite applications have improved weather forecasting and disaster prediction, and enabled better environmental management. Mapping tools and other applications have found their way into many aspects of government and commercial spheres.

Global navigation satellite systems have revolutionised the transport and logistics sector, from taxis to deliveries to aeronautics.

Solar capture will bring down the cost of energy, opening new sectors such as solar energy from space, the manufacturing of energy-intensive products such as semi-conductors in space, and the use of data centres in orbit that benefit from low ambient temperatures.

The international space station has pioneered the use of scientific experimentation and laboratory testing, opening the potential of autonomous laboratories and the growth in research as a service. This in turn has precipitated the development of private space stations.

At a meta level, the volume of equipment currently in space (hundreds of thousands of objects) and set to be created or sent to space opens a new area in refurbishing and maintaining space equipment as well as manufacturing and recycling it. Further opportunities exist to decarbonise the sector.

Other sectors include defence and security, mining or rare minerals.

Gulf economies are becoming major space investors, funding connectivity that already reaches developing regions. This session connects that capital with developing-country demand.

Expected Outcomes

- **Investment Map:** Participants identify the space-economy opportunities open to developing countries: satellite connectivity, earth observation, and downstream data services.
- **Policy Consensus:** Governments identify the policies and partnerships needed to attract space investment and convert it into development gains.
- **Workstream Announcement:** UNOOSA and UNCTAD may announce a "Space Economy for Developing Countries" workstream under the Space2030 Agenda. Concept note: link.

Programme

High-level panel · duration to be confirmed · theatre, 150–200.

Guiding questions:

- How can developing countries attract space investment and convert it into connectivity, climate resilience and economic opportunity on the ground? The panel will also ask:
- Where can developing countries position themselves on the space supply chain, in a sector of high innovation, high value and quality jobs?
- Which partnerships between governments, investors and research institutions are working, and how can they be scaled?
- How can national fiscal and regulatory frameworks keep up with a supply chain that is global and extra-terrestrial?

Topics

- **Connectivity:** Satellite broadband closing the digital divide; Gulf capital funding connectivity that already reaches developing regions.
- **Earth Observation:** Data for agriculture, climate resilience, and disaster response: low cost for the user country, high development payoff.
- **Downstream Economy:** Building companies on space data without launching hardware.
- Shared infrastructure. Pooled satellites and ground stations so smaller economies participate without owning a full programme.
- Closing segment: the pilot register. The final part turns the discussion into delivery: countries record their interest, partners and financiers respond in the room.

Speakers

An opening and five seats, one story: UNCTAD convenes and moderates, then the UN keynote, the host, Gulf capital and ecosystem, the continental partner, and private capital. Proposed names and rationale in the Annex; roles verified, invitations not yet made.

Opening and moderation. Nan Li Collins, Director, Division on Investment and Enterprise, and Head, World Investment Forum, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Seat 1. Keynote, the UN frame. Driss El Hadani**,** Deputy Director, UNOOSA. Availability on 25 October.

Seat 2. Host anchor, Qatar. Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari, President and CEO, Es'hailSat: the commercial connectivity voice.

Seat 3. Gulf capital and ecosystem. Salem Butti Al Qubaisi, Director-General, UAE Space Agency: the policy and ecosystem voice, and the seat with a live investment story to tell.

Alternate: Karim Michel Sabbagh, Managing Director, Space42 (UAE), the Gulf capital, space and AI voice. Reaching out.

Seat 4. Continental partner, Africa. Dr. Tidiane Ouattara, President of the Council, African Space Agency (AfSA), Cairo.

Seat 5. Private capital. Mark Boggett, CEO, Seraphim Space (United Kingdom).

Alternates, by seat, if a principal declines

> Keynote: Lorant Czaran, Chief, Space Applications Section, UNOOSA.
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> Gulf: Haithem Alfaraj, Group CEO, Neo Space Group, Saudi Arabia, the commercial capital voice; Karim Michel Sabbagh, Managing Director, Space42, UAE, the AI and space voice.
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> Connectivity: International Telecommunication Union. ITU was invited on 4 August to propose a speaker; name awaited.
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> Earth observation: Will Marshall, Co-founder and CEO, Planet Labs PBC.
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> Connectivity, commercial: Jean-Francois Fallacher, CEO, Eutelsat Group (OneWeb).

Industrialization and downstream economy: Hamdullah Mohib, acting CEO, Orbitworks, UAE, and CEO of Marlan Space: satellites built and assembled in the region, not only capital deployed into it.

Organization

UNCTAD focal points: Ian Richards (Business Facilitation) and Nelson Pérez. Co-organizer: UNOOSA. Supporters to approach: Gulf space agencies, Seraphim Space, Arabsat.

Useful reading:
https://www.unoosa.org/res/oosadoc/data/documents/2023/a77/a77crp_1add_6_0_html/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-outer-space-en.pdf

Annex: Proposed Speakers

These are proposals prepared by the session team, with each role verified against public sources (2025-2026). These names have been submitted for FO review and confirmation under the agreed process. No invitations have been issued.

Principals, in seat order

Seat 1. Aarti Holla-Maini, Director, UNOOSA. Keynote, the UN frame. Director since 2023, appointed by the Secretary-General, after 25 years in the commercial satellite sector as Secretary-General of the Global Satellite Operators Association. She leads UNOOSA's own Space Economy Initiative under the Space2030 Agenda; the session offers that initiative the capital table it has lacked, with UNCTAD as the investment-facilitation engine. Approach privately and early; she names and co-drafts the announcement.

Sources: unoosa.org/oosa/en/aboutus/director.html · unoosa.org (Space Economy Initiative)

Seat 2. Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari, President and CEO, Es'hailSat (Qatar). Host anchor, commercial connectivity. CEO of the host country's satellite operator since 2011; announced in June 2026 a EUR 295 million satellite for 2030 launch, with Africa and Central Asia in its footprint. He is the session's argument in person, Gulf capital funding connectivity that reaches developing regions. Frame him as the builder of the pipe, selling capacity, not a donor.

Sources: eshailsat.qa/meet-the-eshailsat-team · qna.org.qa (30 Jun 2026, Es'hail-3 announcement)

Seat 3. Salem Butti Al Qubaisi, Director-General, UAE Space Agency. Gulf policy and ecosystem. Director-General since 2021 of the Gulf's most established space agency, including board oversight of the Emirates Mars Mission. Bill him as the policy and ecosystem principal, distinct from the commercial voices, and invite the UAE to contribute a named pillar, access through its Space Economic Zones and capacity-building, badged as a UAE initiative plugged into Space2030. The UAE's cumulative space investment has passed 12 billion dollars, about half from the private sector, and its National Space Strategy 2031 targets a top-10 global space economy, giving this seat a live investment story to announce.

Sources: space.gov.ae/en/about-us/director-general · spacenews.com (appointment) · agbi.com and arabianbusiness.com (UAE space investment tops 12 billion dollars; National Space Strategy 2031)

Seat 4. Dr. Tidiane Ouattara, President of the Council, African Space Agency (AfSA), Cairo. Anchor continental partner. AfSA, inaugurated in April 2025 at Egypt's Space City, is the continental front door for external capital. His thesis is Africa as producer, not consumer: seat him as a principal co-shaping the workstream, with a concrete capability or co-investment line routed through AfSA, not as a beneficiary. Note: AfSA's Statute provides for a Director-General, but no appointment has been announced; the Council Presidency is today the senior post and the correct addressee.

Sources: africanspaceagency.org/leadership · spaceinafrica.com (20 Apr 2025)

Seat 5. Mark Boggett, CEO and Managing Partner, Seraphim Space (United Kingdom). Private capital. Founder in 2016 of the first venture fund dedicated to space technology; his latest fund counts Saudi operator Arabsat among its investors, a live Gulf-to-spacetech capital bridge. He wants bankable pipeline, not a communique: pair his seat with the pilot register so he leaves with meetings.

Sources: spacenews.com (25 Feb 2026, fund close) · seraphim.vc/about/team

Alternates, by seat, if a principal declines

Keynote seat. Lorant Czaran, Chief, Space Applications Section, UNOOSA. Indicated as the alternate if the Director is held in New York by the Fourth Committee. Source: UN document A/AC.105/C.1/2026/CRP.1, 11 February 2026.

Gulf seat. Haithem Alfaraj, Group CEO, Neo Space Group (Saudi Arabia). Gulf commercial capital. CEO since April 2026 of the commercial space champion formed by the Public Investment Fund, operating in earth observation and satellite connectivity. Pre-agree the shape of any Saudi commitment with NSG and PIF weeks out; he can announce a framework with a named vertical, not a live figure.

Sources: neospacegroup.com (CEO announcement) · satellitetoday.com (9 Apr 2026)

Gulf seat. Karim Michel Sabbagh, Managing Director, Space42 (UAE). Heads the AI-powered space champion created by the 2024 Yahsat and Bayanat merger, whose shareholders include Mubadala and G42, spanning satellite communications and geospatial AI: a commercial Gulf voice to complement or replace a state agency.

Sources: space42.ai/en/about-us · spacenews.com (Yahsat-Bayanat merger)

Connectivity seat. International Telecommunication Union. ITU was invited on 4 August to propose a speaker; name awaited.

Earth-observation seat. Will Marshall, Co-founder and CEO, Planet Labs PBC. Runs the largest earth-imaging constellation, more than 200 satellites imaging the whole land mass daily, powering agriculture, climate and humanitarian applications: the strongest commercial voice for the session's earth-observation theme, and SDG-friendly for a UN stage.

Sources: planet.com/company · weforum.org/people/william-marshall

Connectivity seat, commercial. Jean-Francois Fallacher, CEO, Eutelsat Group (OneWeb). Leads the European multi-orbit operator whose OneWeb constellation targets connectivity in underserved markets: the development-aligned, politically neutral alternative among LEO providers. Note: Eva Berneke, former Group CEO, now heads the OneWeb unit.

Sources: spaceintelreport.com (CEO transition) · satnews.com (19 Mar 2026, strategic roadmap)

Industrialization seat. Hamdullah Mohib, acting CEO, Orbitworks (UAE), and CEO of Marlan Space, the Abu Dhabi partner in the joint venture with Loft Orbital. Satellites built and assembled in the region, not only capital deployed into it. Sources: thenationalnews.com (30 Jun 2026) · agbi.com (Jul 2026)