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e-geos, a joint venture between ASI and Telespazio, brings data from the COSMO-SkyMed satellite constellation to the global market

e-geos, a joint venture set up by the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and Telespazio (Finmeccanica/Thales), offers the products from its earth observation satellite system COSMO-SkyMed on the global market. The company, which has sites in Rome and Matera, aims to become a global leader in the sector of geospatial information, with an integrated range of application solutions, content and services, based on synthetic aperture radar (SAR) data and very high resolution (VHR) optical data.

e-geos will operate along the whole of the value chain in earth observation, from data acquisition and processing to the provision of services and applications. Thanks to the system's unique and innovative characteristics, the data acquired from the radar satellites of the Italian COSMO-SkyMed constellation will enable the company to offer operational monitoring services that up to now were impossible.

By 2009, COSMO-SkyMed will have four satellites in orbit (the first two were launched in 2007), equipped with radar sensors capable of operating day and night in all atmospheric conditions, and with frequent revisitation times. They will thus be able to provide rapid and effective application services for the management of emergencies (e.g. earthquakes, fires and floods), for territorial and environmental protection (e.g. landslides, subsidence, oil spills and pollution) and for the monitoring and management of natural resources.

The COSMO-SkyMed system has already demonstrated its effectiveness, following the devastating earthquake that hit China's Szechuan province on 12 May. On 13 May, at the request of the Chinese government, the COSMO-SkyMed satellites took the first radar pictures of the region around the city of Guan Xian, one of the closest to the earthquake's epicentre, showing (as they did with the floods in Myanmar) the system's extraordinarily quick response times in the event of a crisis. Furthermore, the particular weather conditions, with heavy cloud cover and precipitation, highlighted the capabilities of Italian radar satellites in comparison with those of optical satellites. The captured images were processed in a few hours at ASI's Matera Space Centre, which is managed by Telespazio, and allowed observers to assess the earthquake damage caused to buildings, bridges and dams in the region.

COSMO-SkyMed is the earth observation satellite system of the Italian Space Agency and the ministry of defence, of which Telespazio manages the ground segment (control of satellites in orbit and data processing). The satellites are built by Thales Alenia Space Italia. The COSMO-SkyMed system was designed for dual use: military (surveillance) and civil (institutional and commercial requirements), and its particular characteristics mean it can be integrated operationally with other international systems. In particular, the COSMO-SkyMed system will be able to meet the operational requirements of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) programme of the EU and the European Space Agency.