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Space Renaissance: The beginning, not the end.

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Concluding its first conference, the Space Renaissance International (SRI) declared that no matter what some pundits claimed with the final flight of the U.S. Space Shuttle, the work of expanding human civilization beyond Earth is just beginning.

In his remarks to this, the first known such congress held entirely on the Internet, SRI founder and president Adriano Autino said: "This is the end of an age: the age of space used for Earth. And a new age is beginning: the age of space used for human development outside Earth -- the age of Space Renaissance."

The SRI Congress was represented not only by members of the young organization but by curious supporters of worldwide cooperation in matters of space development. In response to the current question "Why go there," SRI member Rob Hunt recalled a statement made by X-Prize founder Peter Diamandis in a TED talk a few years ago. Hunt reported that Diamandis said, "There are three motivators for space development: 1. Curiosity, 2. Fear of global disasters, and 3. Profit." Hunt concluded that all three can be addressed by SRI philosophy.

And what is "SRI Philosophy?" According to the SRI Manifesto, published in 2009, it is grounded in the concept of "Astronautic Humanism" described by Dr. Marco C. Bernasconi: "Astronautical Humanism is based on a scientific view of the Universe, and naturally arrives to a system-oriented, evolutionary approach." Characteristic of astronautic humanism is that human civilization must look up at the stars and not down at our feet. Efforts to conserve the finite resources of this one planet should, and must, continue, but with the clear understanding that Earth will inevitably exhaust them. Steps must be taken starting now to extend the reach of humanity not only to visit other worlds but to establish a permanent presence.

One product of the SRI Congress was the adoption of three specific and concrete projects: first, to assess global civilization risk and countermeasures and communicate with all the scientific and non-scientific communities potentially interested in analyzing the future of civilization and the related challenges; second, to investigate different space business lines and provide solid analyses and priorities for industrial development outside the Earth envelope; third, develop a "Virtual Orbital Space Settlement Project," which will provide a realistic dream environment to communicate with all who would like to experiment with life in an orbital city. This will provide a virtual model upon which a real orbiting space settlement can be constructed in actual space. This project is already under way and attracting attention.

Plans are to make a transcript of the entire four-day SRI Congress available online, but in the meantime, anyone interested in the goals and ambitions of SRI and becoming a member can go to [Space Renaissance International](http://www.spacerenaissance.org) (<http://www.spacerenaissance.org>) for more complete information.

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