

Rome, 30 November 2009

## **Telespazio (Finmeccanica/Thales) presents the “Love Planet Earth 2010” calendar dedicated to deserts**

Telespazio, a Finmeccanica/Thales company, presents the 2010 edition of its “Love Planet Earth” calendar, which is now into its fourth year and this year is dedicated to deserts. Covering a third of the Earth’s land surface, deserts are the true sentries of climate change, representing the clearest sign of the aridity that characterises increasingly large areas of our planet. At the same time, they are often also a resource to be conserved and a source of wealth to be developed.

Taking a satellite’s eye-view of the land lying between the Tropic of Capricorn and the Tropic of Cancer, the Telespazio calendar explores some of the typical issues affecting these areas. These encompass desertification, the indiscriminate exploitation of the land for its raw materials, conflicts sparked by the dearth of natural resources and the gamble of transforming deserts into sources of alternative energy.

The “Love Planet Earth” calendar opens with a satellite image of the Messak plateau in the Libyan Sahara, placed alongside a photograph of rock art and graffiti created thousands of years ago when that area was a forest populated by humans and animals. The second image transports us to the Taklamakan Desert in China, where winds move the dunes at a rate of 160 metres a year, threatening the existence of oases and villages.

The photo showing women carrying amphoras brimming with water reminds us of the dramatic reality faced by millions of people who do not have easy access to this basic necessity. The satellite image of El Oued, in the Algerian Sahara, which was taken in multi-temporal mode by the radar satellites of the COSMO-SkyMed constellation, shows a series of date palm cultivations, demonstrating how the intensive exploitation of water resources can cause the rapid depletion of those resources.

An example of how it is possible to transform deserts into resources is provided by the image of one of the largest solar energy plants in the world, captured by satellites in the Mojave Desert in California. In this case, the desert has become an important source of alternative energy. Control of natural resources made scarcer due to changes in the climate and desertification can spark conflicts between ethnic groups around the world and lead to forced migration. This is dramatically exemplified by the satellite image of the burnt-out village in Dafur, Sudan.

The final page of the 2010 calendar shows an image of Mars alongside one of the Atacama Desert in Chile, which contains regions that are virtually lifeless and where no rain has fallen for centuries. For this reason, the Atacama Desert is believed to be the closest thing on Earth to a Martian environment. Studying other planets in the solar system, like Mars and Venus, helps us to understand the climatic changes taking place on Earth and the conditions determining the habitability of extrasolar planets.

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**Telespazio**, a joint venture between Finmeccanica (67%) and Thales (33%), is a world leader in satellite services: from management of satellites to Earth observation services, from satellite navigation to broadband multimedia telecommunications. Telespazio plays a leading role in the reference markets harnessing technological experience acquired over the years and through its participation in major European space programs such as: GALILEO, EGNOS, GMES and COSMO-SkyMed. The company in 2008 generated sales of EUR 432 million, and employed around 1,900 staff.

For many years Telespazio has been involved in observation and monitoring activities and, along with its subsidiary e-GEOS, a company created in partnership with the Italian Space Agency, is today one of the major global operators in the field of geospatial information, offering an integrated range of application solutions, content and services, based on radar and high-resolution optical data.

From today, you can download the Love Planet Earth 2010 calendar and individual images to your PC desktop from Telespazio's website ([www.telespazio.com/calendar](http://www.telespazio.com/calendar)), where you will also find an extensive section dedicated to these environmental topics, together with news and in-depth reports from a range of sources.

This year, the calendar will once again be available at newsstands: it will be included in the December issue of the monthly magazine *Le Scienze*, the Italian edition of *Scientific American*, the most prestigious scientific periodical in the world.