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Telespazio (Finmeccanica/Thales) presents the Love Planet Earth 2009 calendar dedicated to the theme of water

Telespazio, a Finmeccanica/Thales company, presents the third edition of the Love Planet Earth calendar, dedicated in 2009 to the theme of water and the environmental disasters associated with it. Combining six satellite images with the same number of photographs, Telespazio explores the theme of the new environmental disasters associated with this basic resource, encompassing the pollution of seas and freshwater sources, its intensive and often indiscriminate use in agriculture, the effects of global warming on the glaciers that feed the great rivers and the drastic changes to the marine ecosystem.

Water is the primary resource that mankind looks for on faraway planets, but protects poorly on Earth. One person in eight in the world today has no access to water. And according to the UN, by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will face this problem.

With the aid of the six satellite images produced by Telespazio, we can observe some of the effects of this disaster. The calendar opens with an image of the Baltoro Glacier, which like other glaciers in the Tibet and Qinghai regions, supplies millions of people with freshwater but has been hit by the effects of climate change. The Gulf of Tonkin, surrounding Weizhou island, paints an alarming picture: a thin, continuous stream of oil is poured into the sea from oil platforms, reaching the coast of southern China. The photograph of a boat in the middle of what remains of the Aral Sea between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which 50 years ago was the fourth largest lake in the world, bears witness to what the UN considers one of the greatest environmental disasters caused by man.

And the image of the Barents Sea in Norway, as seen from space, reveals luxuriant phytoplankton, the first level of the food chain, whose delicate equilibrium is threatened by pollution. The satellite image of pivot crops along the banks of the Columbia river in the US aids our understanding of how the increase in cultivated areas in semi-arid zones can cause the degradation of water resources. The calendar closes with an image of the Red Sea coral reefs: here global warming and the resulting increase in sea levels is putting one of the most important eco-systems in terms of bio-diversity under considerable stress.

From today, you can download the Love Planet Earth calendar and individual images to your PC desktop from Telespazio's website (<http://www.telespazio.com/calendar09/index.html>), 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.

The calendar is also available from newsstands for the first time: on 29 November, it will be published with the December issue of the monthly magazine, *Le Scienze*, the Italian edition of Scientific American, the most prestigious scientific periodical in the world.

For many years Telespazio has been involved in observation activities and 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. Two of the satellite images in the Calendar, in particular, were produced by the radar satellites of COSMO-SkyMed, the Italian system, financed by the Italian Space Agency and the Ministry of Defence, which thanks to its unique and innovative characteristics can offer operational monitoring services that up to now were impossible.