



PRESS RELEASE
For 12 April 2021

Anniversary of the first human in space: Yuri Gagarin, 12 April 1961

Lausanne, Switzerland, 12 April 2021 – **On 12 April 2021 the FAI will celebrate the 60th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin’s historic orbit around the Earth, in which he broke three world records and made a lasting impact on human space exploration.**

Sixty years ago, on 12 April 1961, the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin launched from the then secret location named ‘Baikonur’ in Kazakhstan in the spherical capsule Vostok 1, carried into space by the Vostok 8K72K rocket.

Vostok 1 made one full orbit around the Earth at a speed of 27,400km/h, and completed a flight of 108 minutes in total. The capsule itself used normal atmospheric air under pressure. It had no means of steering and minimal controls except retro rockets to slow down for the re-entry into the atmosphere, which was controlled by a computer program sending radio commands. Gagarin landed as planned after ejecting from the capsule and deploying his parachute.

On this historic space mission, three world records were broken and ratified by the FAI:

- Flight duration (1h48m)
- Altitude (327km)
- Mass lifted to this altitude (4725kg).

The record application that was submitted to the FAI for ratification and which is held in the FAI archives includes photographs of Gagarin in his uniform and in his flight suit, and an internal view of the space capsule. Gagarin’s signed flight report was also provided in Russian and English, with a detailed statement describing his experience:

“The spaceship put in orbit and the carrier rocket separated, weightlessness set in. At first the sensation was to some extent unusual, although I had experienced weightlessness of short duration before... I controlled the operation of the spaceship equipment, sent reports to the Earth and recorded my observations. During the whole period of weightlessness my work capacity was fully preserved, and I felt fine.”

Gagarin’s experience gave him a unique perspective of the Earth from space. He reported:

“I could clearly distinguish big mountain ranges, big rivers, large forests, coastlines and islands... The stars were somewhat brighter against (the) black background. The Earth had a very distinct and pretty blue halo... It was a magnificent picture.”

This momentous journey had a huge impact on humanity. Further manned space missions followed in quick succession, leading to huge advances in human space exploration in the following decades. Gagarin’s flight led to the foundation of the FAI Astronautic Records Commission (ICARE) under which his records were ratified. ICARE continues to appraise and administer spaceflight records to this day.

Gagarin won three FAI awards for his outstanding contribution to aviation: the FAI Gold Air Medal, the FAI Gold Space Medal and the De La Vaulx Medal. In 1968, following Gagarin’s death in a tragic training flight accident, the FAI established the Yuri A. Gagarin Gold Medal, awarded annually to the space pilot

who in the previous year has accomplished the greatest achievement in Man's conquest of Space. The most recent winner was astronaut Tim Peake (GBR).

The 12 April is celebrated annually by the UN as the International Day of Human Space Flight.

Notes for editors

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FAI archive record file: <http://bit.ly/gagarin-record-file>

Gagarin Records: <http://bit.ly/gagarin-records>

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About FAI

FAI, the World Air Sports Federation, is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Ballooning, Drones, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying, Skydiving and all other Aeronautic activities and Space records.

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