



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE DU BENIN

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République du Bénin**

**Cérémonie d'ouverture du
16^{ième} Forum des Usagers d'EUMETSAT en Afrique
16th EUMETSAT User Forum in Africa**

**Palais des Congrès
Cotonou, le 16 septembre 2024**

- HE Minister of Living Environment and Transport, in charge of sustainable development
- HE Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy and Digitalization of ECOWAS,
- HE Chairman of the Council of the African Space Agency,
- Mr. Representative of HE Commissioner of the African Union for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment,
- Madam Representative of the Africa Regional Office of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and Secretariat of AMCOMET,
- Mr. Director General of EUMETSAT,
- Mr. Director General of Météo Benin and Permanent Representative of Benin to the WMO,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Dear Guests.

Introductory remarks

It is a great pleasure to be here today and contribute to the opening of this 16th EUMETSAT User Forum in Africa event on behalf of the European Union. I am pleased to see so many climate change specialists, great scientists and meteorologists.

First let me say that the European Union is a long-standing partner of Africa through regional initiatives but we have also strong partnerships at national level, in particular with Benin, cooperating in a number of areas: security, governance, global gateway components covering transport, energy, private sector development. Early this year we signed a programme to support vocational training, energy and an integrated programme in the north of Benin. The sessions tomorrow regarding space services, data access will be very useful for our future programme.

Climate events in recent years have impacted the implementation of development strategies of our African partners. The sustainable economic growth in Benin and in the region is becoming more and more vulnerable to the increasingly frequent devastating weather extremes associated with climate change.

In February 2022, during the last summit, the EU and the African Union recognised the importance to address climate change in our Green Transition and Digitalisation cooperation as part of “the Joint Vision for 2030”. This is also another important key priority of our Global Gateway strategy.

Allow me also to recall we do have a bilateral arrangement with the African Union to share data gathered by the Copernicus programme. This fosters the exchange of Earth observation data between Europe and Africa. This data can be used to develop tools to monitor the environment, crops, water bodies and coastal ecosystems, as well as for disaster management, among many others.

Through various programmes since 2002 (PUMA, AMESD, MESA), the EU has supported the procurement of satellite data reception stations in each sub-Saharan country providing continuous access and exploitation of earth observation data to African national and regional institutions. Satellite observations are an essential input to weather prediction and to analyse long-term time series from space in support of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The ongoing ClimSA “Climate Services and related Applications Programme” is an important investment aimed at strengthening the entire climate and weather services value chain; one objective of this programme is to strengthen the operations of the 6 African Regional Climate Centres, and for those Centres not yet WMO certified to become so, with the technical assistance of the WMO (World Meteorological Organisation). ClimSA, of the JRC and EUMETSAT. ClimSA is for example providing services to our African partners to design and implement their agriculture and blue economy strategies or to carry out a disaster risk reduction plan. Climate information is used to inform for instance farmers when to plant certain crops, when to irrigate and when to harvest. It can also help countries and regions to prepare for possible disease outbreaks and make strategic decisions on water and energy infrastructure.

Through the same programme and with the support of EUMETSAT and of the Joint Research Center of the European Commission (the JRC), the African Union Commission is procuring new generation satellite data reception stations and climate stations, compatible with the

Meteosat third generation data which will enable more precise monitoring of our changing atmosphere, land surfaces and ocean. This will be an important investment which will help the implementation of a national project in weather- and climate-dependent sectors in Benin, and will be central to the provision of effective and sustainable multi-hazard early warning systems.

Going beyond this programme, I would like to mention the various support we are providing regarding space services to Africa and also what the future plans are.

The Global Monitoring for Environment & Security (GMES) & Africa is a EUR 50 million project which focuses on the information services value chain: from access to data, to process data tailor-made to the needs of African countries, to training people on policy development and enabling institutional frameworks. It also involves the private sector and encourages partnerships between private sector companies.

Finally, the last declarations chaired by the African Union, both in Abidjan and in Dar El Salaam, put a strong emphasis on requesting support to strengthen African capacities to fully benefit from the new generation of satellite services, which is key for climate sensitive socio-economic sectors.

Based on these ongoing programmes, and in response to partners' needs, the EU is preparing an Africa – EU Space partnership programme. The first part will become operational in early next year and will focus on three main components: (i) Space and institutional

partnership; (ii) Space for Early warning and (iii) Space and private sector.

The Space for Early Warning component is particularly important for this community and I am sure you will have time to discuss about it during the forum to consolidate the partnership, increase ownership and promote life-changing applications in your organisations.

Obviously, EU-Africa space cooperation also goes beyond earth observation and already includes projects around satellite use (EGNOS) for regulating air traffic (in cooperation with the Agency for the Safety of Air Navigation in Africa [ASECNA]).

To conclude, “Space-based information and services” as a truly global digital tool can certainly be instrumental in achieving the goals of the EU Global Gateway, as well as supporting our partners meeting their objectives.

Our goals are ambitious, and we can achieve them only in collaboration with our partners. All these digital solutions are only useful if designed and implemented together with the right local partners leading to a sustainable uptake of space-based information and services.

I wish you fruitful sessions that will be able to provide you with relevant information on the main activities and benefits of satellite data in Africa for general information or for decision making processes.

In particular, I hope that the Forum will allow you to be updated on the status of related programmes, to identify possibilities of collaboration

and also discuss future perspectives linked to the transition to new generation of satellites data & products.

Thank you.