

THE USE OF REGIONALLY OWNED SPACE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN WEST AND NORTH AFRICA

***15TH – 16TH OCTOBER 2007
ROCKVIEW HOTEL ABUJA***

COMMUNIQUE

A communiqué of a workshop on the use of regionally owned space infrastructure for Disaster management in West and North Africa: status quo and prospects held on the 15th and 16th October, 2007 at the Rock View Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria.

The workshop was organized by the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and the International Institute for Geoinformation Science and Earth Observation (ITC), with funding from the Netherlands Fellowship Programme, and with contributions from RECTAS and UN-OOSA. Participants were drawn from ITC, the Netherlands and African countries of Cameroon, Benin, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

The objectives were to assess the current status of space infrastructure owned and operated by North and West African countries, review current and future developments and achievements, review limitations and deficiencies in data quality, availability and use and explore ways for enhanced capacity building, regional networking and having to learn from experiences of other regions.

In his key note address the Director General NEMA pointed out that Disaster Management must be able to contribute to the preparation of mechanisms for hazards risk analysis and provide information for impact of hazards and reduce the risk of natural disasters, as well as communicate the results to decision makers and the general public. He, therefore, charged the workshop participants to consider how to make best use of our space infrastructure to provide better means to mitigate and manage disasters as well how to share common experience, identify common challenges and provide appropriate strategies for the future.

The Director General NASRDA in his good will message stated that the agency's aspiration is to ensure that Africa makes the best use of data/information from NigComSat-1 and other regionally owned satellites for the sustainable development of the continent especially in disaster management and disaster/risk reduction. Also stressing that NigComSat-1 Nigeria's first communications satellite will meet Africa's ICT needs and provide a powerful tool for disaster site communication and public education. NigeriaSat-2 will enable large scale mapping and generation of Digital Terrain Model (DTM) of disaster sites and serve as a viable alternative to aerial photography of a location for emergency response planning.

A representative of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands lauded the initiative of the workshop in the area of disaster management and expressed the support of her

government. She stressed that it is the goal of Netherlands Fellowship programme through demand oriented fellowship programmes to foster institutional development to maximize the benefit of the refresher courses and the NFP alumni, impacting on capacity building and linkages with institutions for development.

In all the presentations, disasters were recognized as critical and detrimental to human development because, when they happen, they disrupt all life support systems. Types and causes of different disaster were discussed, with human induced causes noted as remarkable in some of the disasters being experienced the world over. The workshop also stressed that disasters cut across national and international boundaries, making no country immune to disasters.

In order to handle disaster management and response effectively the workshop emphasized the need to develop geospatial data that can be used to relate to disasters when it happens. Other relevant issues discussed for consideration and adoption by participants include:

- Capacity building and institutional development stressing on the need for provision of facilities, equipment, know-how and expertise to drive disaster management, response and mitigation. Development of curricula in universities and institutions exploring the United Nations University initiative through linkages with recognized African Institutions, ITC and UNEDRA network was agreed upon. It was also agreed that UNEDRA needs to broaden the scope of its activities.
- Collaboration and networking involving agencies, stakeholders and government to ensure understanding between data generating bodies or organizing bodies such that the responsibility of data generation and sharing must be defined and shared by all stakeholders. This will enable identification of data collection types and needs at different phases of disaster e.g. prevention, mitigation, post disaster.

Inventory of data and standardization was emphasized with a focus on implementation of spatial data infrastructure noting that Geo-information policy should be approved in all countries and funded adequately to encourage bilateral meetings and regional licensing policy to be adopted by all.

The need to study and understand the complex profile of Africa was stressed, urging countries to make concerted efforts towards maintaining and use of a common reference framework.

- There has to be extra-regional stimulation to include cross cutting regional issues and more integrated approach through regional cooperation exploring networks and linkages.

Creating websites for information exchange was also stressed however with requests for a stand alone UNEDRA website urgently needed.

- There were requests for NASDRA to play a very important role by reaching out to other stakeholders and display their products.
- NEPAD should be a key driver for cooperation in use of Space technology.
- Ground stations can be established in the various regions to reduce cost of data acquisition.
- AU should advocate use of African satellites data.
- African governments and agencies should prioritize the use of DMC data.

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