



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Earth observation programmes with Africa to be intensified**

In the frame of the EU Africa Summit 2014, Vice President Tajani, Commissioner Piebalgs and African Commissioner Ikounga will sign today a Cooperative Arrangement to acknowledge the progress made so far in the GMES and Africa programme preparation, to give a political impetus to the implementation and to confirm the intention of developing long term cooperation between European Commission and the Commission of the African Union in the Earth Observation domain. The Global Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (GMES and Africa) program is ensuring the regular observation and monitoring of Earth sub-systems, the atmosphere, oceans, and continental surfaces.

The programme aims at strengthening capacities and developing infrastructure for the exploitation by African users of Earth Observation in support of environmental and security policies for sustainable development of African countries. The program can play a positive role in Africa to favor sustainable growth and to contribute to the implementation of policies in various fields such as food security, health and education, not to mention the important role it can have in disasters management and climate change adaptation.

Earth Observation plays a strategic role in supporting inclusive and sustainable development, and in providing essential information for policymakers, scientists, businesses and society at large. In this context, GMES and Africa, proposed as an extension of COPERNICUS initiative to Africa, is considered as a relevant framework for the development of Earth Observation activities in Africa.

In this context of today's signature it will also be agreed to develop a long term cooperation in the area of Earth Observation between EU and Africa, in particular through the exchange of experiences, sharing of data and access to services of common interest under GMES and Africa, and under the European Earth Observation programme COPERNICUS.

### **Background**

The Lisbon process signed in 2007 at the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, foresees the preparation, in the framework of the EU-AU partnership, of an "Action Plan on GMES and Africa". The Action plan was prepared and priority thematic areas of intervention were validated in 2012-2013 paving thus the way for the launch of the implementation of operational Earth Observation services in Africa by 2015-2016. It is expected to dedicate funds coming from the EU Pan Africa Programme to implement this activity.

In October 2006, the Maputo Declaration, signed by the African Union Commission, the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the ACP Secretariat and Mozambique, called upon the European Union to plan an extension of its GMES initiative to Africa.

The GMES and Africa initiative was officially launched under the Joint EU - Africa Strategic Partnership (JAES) upon initiative of the Portuguese Presidency. In December 2007, during the EU-Africa Lisbon Summit in Lisbon, "*The Lisbon Process on GMES and Africa*" was endorsed by the Heads of States of Europe and Africa. The Lisbon process foresees the preparation, in the framework of the EU-AU partnership, of an "Action Plan on GMES and Africa".

In 2012 and 2013, three priority thematic areas of the Action Plan on GMES and Africa were successfully validated through workshop consultations in Africa, paving thus the way for the implementation of operational Earth Observation services in Africa by 2015-2016.

In February 2014, a High Level Troika meeting confirmed the success of the preparation of the GMES and Africa programme. A budget for implementation has been proposed under the EU Pan Africa Programme and the formulation of the GMES and Africa programme can now start in 2014.

The involvement of the European Commission in GMES and Africa is in line with the mandate of COPERNICUS to support development policies. A close collaboration will be established between GMES and Africa and COPERNICUS to foster cooperation and to strengthen the support that Earth Observation can bring to African citizen. GMES and Africa will also ensure the continuity with the AMESD – MESA EDF DG DEVCO programmes.

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