

Statement by EUMETSAT Director-General

Opening Ceremony

12th EUMETSAT User Forum in Africa

Kigali, Rwanda, 13 September 2016

Alain Ratier

Director-General

- Mrs Fatina MUKARUBIBI, Permanent Secretary representing the Minister of Natural Resources, Republic of Rwanda
- Her Excellency Marie Thérèse Chantal Mfoula, Assistant Secretary General, Economic Community of Central African States
- His Excellency Hassan Adoum Bakhit Hagggar, Commissioner for Infrastructure and sustainable development, Central African Economic and Monetary Community
- Dr Josue Dione, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner, representing H.E. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission
- Mr Wenjian ZHANG, Assistant Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organisation
- The representative of the European Union Delegation to Rwanda
- Ladies and gentleman representatives of the African countries,
- Ladies and gentleman representatives of regional and international organisations
- Ladies and gentleman,
- Dear users

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to be here with you in Kigali and take part in the 12th EUMETSAT User Forum in Africa.

Since the last User Forum, which took place in 2014 in Benoni, South Africa, a couple of important decisions and milestones have taken place on the EUMETSAT that I believe will further strengthen our relationship with Africa.

Let me first mention the approval of a new strategy by our Council last June. This strategy, named “Challenge 2025”, provides the general framework and guidance for EUMETSAT activities in the decade to come. One important element for this Forum is that Challenge 2025 reaffirms the commitment of our 30 Member States to the cooperation with Africa.

Our first commitment to Africa will remain to facilitate access to EUMETSAT satellite products, but also to environmental, climate and meteorological information, and to help the African user communities best exploit this information to fulfil the needs at continental, regional and national level, in areas such as disaster risk reduction and resilience, agriculture, transport, water management, and adaptation to climate change.

This means in particular that we will continue our EUMETCast-Africa service and to support training programmes in Africa in

cooperation with regional Training Centres, as part of capacity building initiatives supported by the African Union, the European Union and the World Meteorological Organisation.

However, we are aware that our contribution alone cannot ensure that the benefits from our satellite data to Africa are sustained and maximised. This can only be achieved with the strong involvement and commitment from the user communities, and your presence at this Forum is a very positive signal in this respect. But this is not enough. We also need to make sure that our activities and projects are aligned with institutional framework and policies such as the Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology and the Joint EU-Africa Strategy. This is indeed necessary to give full confidence that our activities and projects will deliver socio-economic benefits at continental, regional and national level, and will attract the necessary institutional and funding support from Africa and Europe.

This being said, EUMETSAT has no political ambition in Africa, and we are fully aware that our scientific, technical and operational contribution is quite modest, in view of the challenges in front of Africa. Our only ambition is to be and remain a trusted and committed partner, building on our operational capacities and on the relationship we have established and developed with you over the years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our cooperation can only be sustained and meaningful in the long term if EUMETSAT can commit to secure the continuity of satellite systems and services to users over the next decades. And I wish to inform you that this prerequisite condition is now fulfilled as a result of a number of achievements and decisions in the last two years.

First, in 2015 we launched and successfully commissioned our last Meteosat Second Generation satellite, MSG-4, now renamed Meteosat-11, and stored it in orbit. This means that we have now four operational MSG satellites in orbit, enabling operations from 0° at least until 2025, and that, as a result, we are in the best possible situation for a safe transition with the Meteosat Third Generation system to be deployed from 2021 onwards.

The successful commissioning of MSG-4 allowed our Council to decide in June 2016 to move Meteosat-8 to 41°5 East, over the Indian Ocean, to replace Meteosat-7, the last first generation satellite, at the end of its record long lifetime of 19-years. This fulfils one major recommendation of our last user Forum, and offers not only service continuity but also a better service, based on a much more capable satellite, creating new opportunities for improvements in cyclone tracking and nowcasting of high impact weather.

For the polar orbit, we are planning to launch our last Metop satellite – Metop-C – in October 2018, and we are confident we will be able to continue exploiting Metop-A at least until 2020. This means that, subject to the successful commissioning of Metop-C, we will be able to maintain and exploit two Metop satellites in orbit, and even three for a couple of years.

This is of course excellent news for the development of a Numerical Weather Prediction capability in Africa, that you are developing under the SAWIDRA continental project led by ACMAD, as one key element of a strategy for improving Early Warning Systems in support to disaster risk reduction.. This means indeed that the RARS-Africa network of ground stations to be deployed as part of SAWIDRA will access in near real time data broadcast by up to three Metop satellites to deliver relevant products to be assimilated by your NWP models.

Another important decision of our Council was the approval of the EPS Second Generation programme in June 2015, which formalised EUMETSAT's commitment to deliver more and better data from the mid morning polar orbit in the 2021-2042 timeframe. The Metop-SG satellites will be much more capable than the current generation of Metop, and you can be assured that they will broadcast data to the four X band stations of your RARS-Africa network.

Another major achievement is that we are now exploiting two more ocean satellites on behalf of the EU Copernicus programme, Jason-3, launched on 17 January 2016, and Sentinel-3A launched on 16 February. In addition, our Council has approved in September 2015 the Jason-CS/sentinel-6 programme, thus securing the continuity of Jason-class ocean altimetry measurements until 2030.

So as you can see, the future of our cooperation is established on solid foundations and very promising, in view of the successful launches of the last satellites from the current generation and of the enhanced capabilities expected from the next generation satellite systems currently under development, in particular MTG and EPS-SG.

From a user perspective access to and use of data from the current generation of satellites has certainly priority in the coming years, as this will determine the success of the MESA, SAWIDRA and GMES&Africa projects, that are all challenges in themselves and strategic investments for the future.

What is at stake is the further improve weather services at regional and national levels, in particular forecasting of extreme events and early warnings, and to develop climate services in Africa, as foreseen by the strategy adopted by the AMCOMET ministers - but also to develop other applications that are key for sustainable development,

such as agriculture, management of water, marine and natural resources and transport.

During this forum we will discuss achievements and remaining challenges of these projects and you can be assured that EUMETSAT will continue to support them and their sponsors and to respond to requirements for the dissemination of additional products identified by the RAIDEG.

This forum will also discuss access to data from the Copernicus Sentinel-3 satellite and opportunities for their use in Africa, in combination with other ocean products available on EUMETCast, noting that EUMETSAT plans to start disseminating Sentinel-3 marine products to Africa in November 2016, on behalf of the EU. Additional capacities will be needed on the user side to develop oceanographic, marine and fisheries applications of this data, possibly within the GMES&Africa programme that will be presented by the African Union Commission. EUMETSAT will support this effort through a first Massive Open On-line Course (MOOC) on monitoring the oceans starting on 24 October and new courses on marine forecasting for African marine meteorologists.

Last but not least, we will discuss plans for preparing users for the transition from Meteosat Second Generation to Meteosat Third Generation, based on the results of a dedicated study that you recommended and that we have carried out with the support of

RAIDEG. The results of this study will be presented during a dedicated session.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to pursue with some words on climate change. We all know Africa and the island states of the Caribbean and the Pacific are among the most vulnerable regions. The Paris Agreement adopted at the COP-21 stresses the need to strengthen scientific knowledge on climate, including research, **systematic observation of the climate system** and early warning systems, in a manner that **informs climate services and supports decision-making**

It is therefore indispensable that Africa and ACP states build, at institutional, scientific and technical level, the capacity to deliver climate information services to their decision makers, to build well founded adaptation policies.

The Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) and its Implementation Plan provides guidelines to achieve this, and I am delighted that the high level meeting of yesterday evening reaffirmed the commitment to rapidly operationalize the new Regional Climate Application and Prediction Centre for Central Africa for the benefits of the various countries.

Let me conclude by recalling that 2016 is a special year for EUMETSAT, as we celebrate our 30th Anniversary. During the celebration, several Africa users, who have been involved in our cooperation since the very beginning, came to Darmstadt to report on the history, achievements and benefits of this partnership, and to give their personal perspective for the future. I am sure this Forum will be one first milestone towards fulfilling their expectations, and of course, and foremost, also yours.

I wish to thank the government of Rwanda again for hosting this Forum in Kigali.

I wish to thank also the Rwanda Meteorology Agency, the Ministry of Natural Resources and EUMETSAT staff for the excellent organisation

I thank you for your attention.