

OPENING REMARKS BY EU

Opening Ceremony of 12th EUMETSAT User forum, 13/09/2016, Kigali

Honorable Permanent Secretary, Your Excellencies, dear guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is a great pleasure to be here today and contribute to the opening of this 12th EUMETSAT event on behalf of the European Union. It is fantastic to see so many African scientists and particular meteorologists today, together with policy makers.
2. The recent climate change agreement concluded in Paris and the international agreement on Sustainable Development Goals from Rio create an excellent opportunity for all of us – opportunity which we need to seize without delay and work together to make these agreements a reality. Never before has climate change become such a driving force to modify our technology, to direct our funding, to pursue cooperation, to do things differently.
3. In the European Union, we are already making a significant contribution towards the shift in how things are done. First, we are mainstreaming climate action in national economies across the EU through ambitious targets to reduce emissions, increase the share of renewable energy and improve energy efficiency.
4. Second, climate action is key element of our external development policy. The European Commission alone is aiming to spend around 20% of its development portfolio on climate-related projects and programmes. This is in line with the overall target of making at least 20% of the entire European Union budget for 2014-2020 "climate relevant".

5. Finally, climate action is a key issue in our dialogue and cooperation with third countries and regions. The 4th Summit of the Africa-EU Heads of State held in 2014 adopted a roadmap, which identifies 'climate change and environment' as one of the key areas for cooperation.
6. None of our actions could be done without having reliable and accurate data, which are a crucial element for being able to initiate and pursue effective climate change action. Reliable and accurate data allow for evidence-based policy-making and effective action.
7. The European Union has been supporting several projects and programmes targeting Africa's access and use of reliable climate-related data through Earth observation technologies.
8. PUMA, AMESD, MESA – I am sure that you are much more familiar with these abbreviations than myself. These are three consecutive programmes where the EU has teamed up with EUMETSAT to support Earth observation applications and services in Africa. The EU overall financial contribution to these programmes has been about €70 million.
9. We are also spending some €80 million to help strengthen Disaster Resilience to Natural Hazards in Sub-Saharan African and we support the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev) programme. Together with EUMETSAT these programmes will continue to further support capacity building of national and regional climate centres, give access to additional Earth observation data and guide the effective integration of climate information into development planning. We work closely on implementation of these programmes with the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities as well as the Regional Information Centres and UN organisations.
10. The joint work and team spirit demonstrated in the process of implementation of these programmes serves as an inspiration. Major progress has been made – we are now able

to better forecast climate developments, have better understanding of crisis situations or be better prepared for mitigation of their consequences. Millions of lives were saved and economic activities safeguarded with the help of these programmes.

11. But apart from their core value, these programmes are also equally valuable in terms of their contribution to the wider objectives of regional and continental integration in Africa. The successful development of regional climate prediction and application centres in East and West Africa and the progress made yesterday with a high level policy commitment for the development of a similar Centre for Central Africa are promising.
12. We are now working to further extend our cooperation. You have all probably heard about the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Africa initiative to create an overarching framework in Africa for Earth Observation applications. The EU has supported this initiative which has three priority thematic areas – marine and coastal areas, water resources and natural resources management. This initiative will be implemented from 2017, as a follow up to MESA, and will be managed by the African Union Commission. EU overall contribution to the whole project will be around 28 Mo€ and the project will enable the consolidation of services developed through the MESA project and support their expansion to other geographic zones of the continent, including Northern African countries and South Africa. Support will be provided to also develop new services. EUMETSAT will continue to play a major supporting role.

Honourable Permanent Secretary, Your excellences, dear ladies and gentlemen,

13. Let me once again reiterate that I am very pleased to be here today and demonstrate the European Union's strong commitment to addressing the challenge of green growth and climate resilience. I am proud of our partnerships, dialogue and cooperation in this area

and it may be worth to investigate if we can apply some of the lessons learned in this area to other areas of cooperation.

14. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank EUMETSAT for our successful teamwork at the European as well as pan-African levels to facilitate access and use of the crucial climate-related data. Together we have achieved a lot and I believe there will be many more achievements to celebrate!

15. I wish you all the very best with the proceedings of this Forum!

Thank you for your attention.