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THE LEGAL AND POLICY FOUNDATIONS FOR AN AFRICAN SPACE AGENCY

Abstract

The creation of an African Space Agency has generated much discussions recently with the announcement by the African Union Ministerial Committee on Communications (AMCOST) to convene a Working Group to develop the African Space Policy framework with a view to lay the foundations for the establishment of the continental Space Agency. The critics point to the underdeveloped national space programs as a limiting factor militating against establishing such a body. On the other hand, the importance of, and the benefits derived from enhanced cooperation at a continental or regional level is underscored by contemporary practice towards greater international cooperation in space use and exploration.

Space technology has demonstrated its efficacy in addressing delivery of much needed services and products in geographically dispersed and vast under-populated areas such as the African continent. Space applications related to environmental management, food security, early warning and emergency responses, including disaster management, can be harnessed effectively through cooperative mechanisms, especially where fragmentation has led to ineffective responses as a result of lack of financial and human resources.

Yet, effective cooperation mechanisms must be based on solid policy and legal foundations. It is necessary to examine the policy and legal framework necessary to ensure that the mooted African Space Agency is conceived on a solid and responsive basis for effective implementation and roll-out of space applications and programs to address Africa's plight.