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PROMOTING INTRA-AFRICAN SPACE COOPERATION: IS IT TIME FOR AN AFRICAN SPACE
AGENCY?

Abstract

Since the early 2000s, the space arena in Africa has evolved considerably, with the emergence of a number of national space programmes and dedicated national space agencies in Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa. Other countries in Africa are expanding their capabilities to use space-derived geospatial data, and are beginning to consider coordinating their national space activities, which is usually a precursor to establishing a more structured mechanism, such as a space commission or a space agency.

Against this backdrop, at the end of the Third African Union (AU) Conference of Ministers in charge of Communications and Information Technologies, held in August 2010 in Abuja, Nigeria, the Ministers issued the Abuja Declaration, which requested the AU Commission to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of an African Space Agency, taking into account existing initiatives, and to develop an African Space Policy in cooperation with the seven African regional economic communities, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the International Telecommunication Union.

In this paper we will review existing cooperative space activities and regional cooperation mechanisms in Africa. We will discuss the progress made under the aegis of the African Union towards the development of a common African Space Policy. We will also review the arguments advanced in favour of an African Space Agency and we will consider whether this is either a timely or optimal proposal to advance intra-African space cooperation.