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International Cooperation for the benefits of developing countries and emerging space nations (1)

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INDIA-AFRICA SPACE COOPERATION: COMMON GOALS, COMMON PLATFORM

Abstract

International cooperation in space technology and applications is one of the core technology partnerships with potential for enhancing the economic development of developing nations. India has benefitted from international space cooperation initiated during the Cold War and it is now extending those benefits to the South Asian region, which consists of developing and underdeveloped countries. Similarly, India-Africa space cooperation also has high potential for economic and human development of both the regions. India and Africa shares the thoughts on history, culture, religion, economic and social development. These historical linkages can be leveraged for the mutual benefit of India and Africa as well as other key stakeholders.

Satellite services have helped India assess its agriculture output, map natural resources, transportation, ports and urban development. Satellite communications relayed agricultural knowledge and health advisories to hundreds of remote villages simultaneously. India is able to respond proactively to natural disasters in the South Asian region with the use of space technology. India is a primary example demonstrating the benefits of space technology for a developing country. International cooperation with advanced space powers played a critical role in this development.

In the present, India has extended its international cooperation to the South Asian countries by building and launching the South Asia Satellite free of cost. It also had invited these countries to utilize its regional navigation satellite system to enhance trade and connectivity. Similarly, this cooperation should be extended to Africa, which shares the common goal of economic and human development. This requires an efficient use of natural resources and streamlining of infrastructure and urban planning, where space technology is immensely beneficial.

However, even as the African countries are aspiring to build indigenous space programs, the lack of capacity and experience in utilization of space services could delay development objectives. Africa can gain from the experience of India in this regard for creating and sustaining a space program geared towards sustainable development. Such partnership will emerge as a hallmark of South-South cooperation.