

EARTH OBSERVATION SYMPOSIUM (B1)
Future Earth Observation Systems (2)

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GEOAFRICA: A DEDICATED AFRICAN SPACE OBSERVATORY

Abstract

GEO-Africa is the name of a new space mission, conceived by EADS Astrium, to be proposed to African authorities as a new dedicated satellite sensing source to be owned and operated by African authorities. It aims to contribute to the management of environmental resources such as water management, land use-land change, soil erosion-desertification, forest monitoring, risks management, agriculture, etc... GEO-Africa is a complete system: from the satellite to products generation, it is based on an innovative concept of a geostationary optical satellite covering all of Africa with multi spectral medium-high resolution sensing. It is designed to provide maximum synergy with existing and planned systems for use in Africa. GEO-Africa will contribute to Africa's development: it will develop and strengthen African space capacities, and promote research and scientific collaboration between African, European and other worldwide organisations and universities. GEO-Africa will constitute an African contribution to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). Astrium, with the support of the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) Secretariat, proposes an evolving plan on both the political and technical levels. At the technical level, African Earth Observation experts will be consulted concerning Earth Observation user needs and the adequacy of the GEO Africa concept to meet them. This engagement process should lead to consistency and synergy with other African projects thereby enhancing its added value. A first technical workshop with a panel of African experts confirmed the added value of GEO-Africa and the strong interest of the participants to proceed. The workshop participants agreed to organise a dedicated GEO-Africa session during the 7th conference of the AARSE in Accra, Ghana (27-31 October 2008) to enable broader engagement of technical experts. The final declaration of the workshop was very positive, and further welcome the GEO-Africa initiative while encouraging stakeholders to explore links to existing initiatives in Africa. The present paper gives a first overview of the overall GEO-Africa concept and performances, the resulting products and typical downstream applications.