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National and International Space Policies and Programmes for African Development (1)

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AN ASSESSMENT OF SPACE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

**Abstract**

The establishment of the Royal Observatory at the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, in 1820 launched Africa into her first space experience. Since then, there has been an increased interest in space activities in Africa. In recent time, the face of involvement of the African continent in space activities is evolving. For example, there are more international collaborations both within and outside the continent, and the development of national space laws and policies.

Most African countries with space programs have recognized the role that space applications can play in solving some of the problems they face thus, it is common to see many of the African space programs directed towards improved communication, food production, management of natural resources including forests, managing the environment, disaster relief, health, education, and water and energy, and national security. Today, nine African countries have active space programs while several others carry on space activities remotely. However, a striking feature of the African space program is the existence of national space laws or policies. It is very interesting to observe that only two countries of the 53 countries that make up the African continent have space policies. These questions then arise: "What drives the African space programs?" "What gives the African space programs a sense of direction?"

This paper will aim at answering the space policy questions raised above, and answer questions on how the African space programs have fared considering the daunting challenges that they face in terms of lack of institutional and human capacity for utilizing satellite imagery and other space capabilities, low political will and motivation to pursue space applications program.