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NATIONAL SPACE PROGRAMMES: AFRICA'S EXPERIENCE

Abstract

In the 1970s and 1980s efforts were made by some African countries to establish national space programs. While a good number of such efforts ended as mere proposals, successful space programmes were starved of funds mainly because the political class failed to appreciate how much space technology can and is already affecting our lives today. The attendant effect of insufficient funding for the development of both human and infrastructural needs for space technology in Africa is observed in the current state of Africa's national space programmes. Today, there are six existing national space and space-related programmes in Africa. The huge dependence of our daily lives on one form of satellite data or the other is not reflected in a meagre six functional satellites owned by various African national space programmes. Africa needs to realise that the acquisition of space technology is a vital part of a nation's infrastructural asset. Over time, experience has shown that the success of a Nation's space program is not only dependent on the vision of her leaders but also on strong financial support from the government. Although Space programs are highly expensive, there is an unquestionable need for unparalleled commitment from all participants to ensure its success. This paper examines earlier efforts made by African countries to set up National space programs and the challenges they faced and also the activities of existing National space programs in Africa and major problems facing them.