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SPACE RELATED DATA: FROM JUSTICE TO DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

Recent judgments of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague demonstrate how satellite data can be a source of justice and consequently a source of peace and development. Indeed, satellite data can help to monitor compliance with international law and enforcement of the same (Human Rights Treaties, Environmental Treaties, Peace Agreements, Disarmament and Arms Control Treaties).

Some recent cases in the field of environment protection as well as border litigations have shown that conflicts can be resolved when satellite based data are admissible to provide judges with the possibility to have an overview of the situation, especially concerning vast areas of limited accessibility and unreliable information which may be the case for many regions of the African continent.

The analyses of these judicial decisions in which satellite data were accepted by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) may serve as an example for African countries and parties involved in conflicting situation or environmental litigations (destruction of rainforests, pollution of water, etc.) as well.

Moreover, the detailed analyses of the ICJ judgments should not only raise awareness of environmental problems but also identify cases of non-compliance with international law (for instance the Kyoto Protocol, UNESCO Convention for the protection of world heritage and biosphere areas). Their violation can be proven by satellite data. Court proceedings can be instituted and it seems hereby more feasible for indigenous groups, regional parties or NGOs to fight for a better development of the country and continent by giving these parties more constructive means.