

Speech Han Wensink for EABF, April 1st 2014

Dear all,

(Thanks)

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to co-chair this Roundtable n° 12: Fostering Business opportunities in the use of Space services at the 5th Africa-EU Business Forum.

First, I would like to express my gratitude in the name of the whole of EARSC to the organizers for having recognized the investment that our companies are doing in the Region and bring their voice to stage. As chairman of EARSC, I am proud of being instrumental in this discussion open to the whole industry and address issues as how to improve the standard of living for the African citizens, producing or maintaining competitive economies, securing supplies of energy, preserving the environment and combating the climate change... ie, giving African stakeholders a greater role and a more eloquent voice when it comes to monitoring their environment and participating in decision making.

Europe is already providing assistance to Africa in the field of satellite applications, if in previous summits the main goal was to better understand the potential benefits of space for development policies as well as to better understand the ambitions and expectations of African stakeholders, this round table will demonstrate the relevance of space technologies as a transversal tool to favour the business opportunities, development and growth. "Doing Business as a catalyst for reforms" could be one title for this round table.

There are certainly possibilities for cooperation in the space sector between Europe and Africa. The indications are also that this cooperation is likely to intensify in the years to come. The challenge now is to understand how to take full advantage of the possibilities that exist, and how to help improve the situation. This Round table should serve at agreeing on a private sector declaration to be submitted to the Summit.

The common position of all these service companies around the table today (and many who are not able to join us but which through EARSC I represent) is characterized by the supply of services and proposed solutions tailored to specific needs of the users of these services. The round table will provide an opportunity to present the capabilities of the European EO services industry and its contribution take stock of progress in achieving the three pillars of sustainable development — economic growth, social development and environmental protection".

EU companies are quite active in developing services with and supplying services to organisations in both the public and private sectors in Africa. Along with your notes for the meeting you should have received a single page highlighting a number of these services. Some of the companies which have been engaged in these services are around the table and we shall hear about them in more detail.

In this respect, it is certainly timely and opportune to undertake a common reflection on

It is a regret to me that very few African companies are around the table today. There is a perception that the space sector is a rich one. This is far from the truth and in the field of EO services, whilst there is much potential it is today a long way behind the communication and navigation sectors. Indeed our recent survey in Europe showed the great predominance of small and micro-enterprises which make up the sector. Some 95% have less than 50 employees and 67% have less than 10. This makes it difficult for them to participate to such meetings as today's but I am nevertheless very pleased to see some that are with us. When it comes to Africa, no precise survey exists of the industrial sector but we can be sure that it also is mainly composed of a very very small enterprises of 2-3 persons which do not have the resources to be represented at these meetings. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why EARSC exists in Europe. Maybe we also need an "EARSC" for Africa and we are certainly ready to help establish such an organisation if it would be decided here to be appropriate.

Africa has some "Space" nations but the EO service sector needs to be developed. Whilst there is often a strong national interest to launch satellites, and indeed some African nations such as Nigeria and S Africa have already done so, in my opinion it is far more important to create a network of companies which can exploit the data which starts to flow freely from satellites owned by others. Specifically, the Copernicus programme will this week meet a major milestone with the launch of the first Sentinel satellite. This will be followed by more over the next few years all delivering operational EO data on a free and open basis.

The return on Investment of the space services sector could be huge but there is still a need to convince African nations to invest firstly in the EO services, not to launch satellites. African autonomy in this field is not the first requirement but the uptake and application of geo-information services using others data can bring an enormous contribution to economic growth and improving the environment as well as protecting African citizens.

At EARSC we consider that the main motor for economic growth is the private sector. We are battling to ensure that companies shall lie at the heart of the provision of Copernicus services. This is also true for Africa and the launch of continental programmes and initiative like "GMES for Africa" is an opportunity for the EO business sector development.

The Sentinels are the centerpiece of Europe's Copernicus Earth observation program, with which the European Union wants to create a modern and efficient infrastructure for Earth observation and Geo-information services. Copernicus will create a sustainable European satellite network to collect and evaluate environmental data for civil safety and humanitarian purposes. Copernicus will provide data on environmental protection, agriculture, forestry, and land-use planning, as well as making data available for disaster management.

In Europe we find that public institutions are often taking the place of the private companies. This hampers investment and ensures that the burden rests on the shoulders of taxpayers. How can we improve the situation ? A good start will be to recognise what is a core government task and to ensure that public bodies do not stray beyond this. A second element is to recognise that if public bodies are performing core tasks they must be adequately funded to deliver the services. There should be no question of them competing in the marketplace alongside the private sector. In this was, companies can make investment decisions secure in the knowledge that the outcome - good or bad - rests in their hands and will not be undermined by what we see as being unfair competition.

Developing the commercial market in Africa will not be easy - it is already hard in Europe. But there are many areas where there are some good benefits to be found. Mining and mineral extraction, energy, agriculture, illegal activities (fishing, logging, mining etc) all come to mind as well as to improve agriculture management and yields. Environmental factors play a strong role and only through global surveillance by satellites can the

necessary measurements be made which can provide the basis for accurate and effective decision making by governments (not just in Africa).

I look forward to fruitful discussions today about future business opportunities in the use of earth observation and geo-information services. As an ice breaker, I would like to make a few comments regarding industry/institutions relationships.

- Public access to data - as a public good - is a foundational element in the transformation of today's world into a vibrant green economy
- Governments need to create the conditions where the private sector can create wealth in the economy.
- ensuring growth and sustainability.
- Ensure new products can be developed and introduced through R&D efforts but also close to the market
- export limitations imposed by member States should be made known to industry upfront,

So how to develop the business sector in Africa? I look forward to hearing your views and to taking these recommendations forward into the full summit.