

**Minister Edna Molewa's Opening address during the 11<sup>th</sup> European Organisation  
for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) Users Forum in Africa**

**Kopanong Conference Centre, Benoni, South Africa**

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Programme Director

Honourable African Union Commissioner, Ms. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime

Honourable Ambassador of the European Union to South Africa, Mr. Roeland Van de Geer

Heads of Regional Economic Communities in Africa

Deputy Director General of WMO

Director General of EUMETSAT

Heads of International Organizations and our Partners

Deputy Director General of the Department of Environmental Affairs, Ms. Judy Beaumont

Vice President of WMO Region 1 (Africa)

CEO of the South African Weather Service, Dr. Linda Makuleni

Directors of Met Services

Distinguished Delegates

Invited guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by extending a warm South African welcome to you all. It is a great pleasure and honour to be hosting the 11<sup>th</sup> EUMETSAT "Users Forum in Africa" right here on our soil. The Users Forum is an excellent platform for technological cooperation and partnership between the African satellite user community and

EUMETSAT. We have seen this Forum grow and reach new milestones through the years. We have also seen how this information and technology have assisted our national weather services and weather forecasting in the region to protect life, property and contribute to economic development.

Programme Director,

Satellite remote sensing has become an integral part of operational environmental monitoring. Within the African continent, where there is an extremely low number of meteorological observations, satellite data has become critical for weather forecasting and climate research. With the advent of climate change, the latest high resolution satellite data is providing vital information for severe weather forecasting and nowcasting.

Our continent, ladies and gentlemen, is extremely vulnerable to climate change and variability. The changing rainfall patterns are already having an effect on agriculture, food and water security. Furthermore, the climate change projections for extreme weather events such as severe storms, droughts and floods are painting a gloomy picture of increasing frequency and severity.

This 11<sup>th</sup> Users Forum will more particularly focus on the implementation of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) in Africa, as supported by the Addis Ababa Declaration and the Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology, as endorsed by the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET). In this regard, South Africa recognizes the need for the development of an efficient mechanism to regularly deliver essential and consistent information on climate change projections - thereby underpinning our national adaptation to climate change. Additional efforts will be needed to establish robust information systems, guidance for appropriate interpretation, and delivery mechanisms to support the potentially wide range of specialized applications, especially at the national level. We are committed to working closely with partners such as EUMETSAT and the World Meteorological

Organisation (WMO) through programmes such as the GFCS to ensure that climate change projections are also included in our product portfolio.

Taking into account both climate change and variability, there is a need to sustain and enhance support for developing and promoting wide access to and the use of climate information, tailored products and services. South Africa takes note of the sound, overarching emphasis on a user-oriented approach within the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) and that the provision of climate information for adaptation and risk management will continue to be a priority for our government. We recognize the need to evolve climate products more amenable for use by decision-makers in different sectors. In the perspective of climate services delivery, the products themselves should transform from basic products, such as rainfall or temperature information, to tailored products that satisfy the users' needs.

There is clearly a need to develop tailored products indicative of impacts such as forecasts of agriculture and crop production outlooks, hydrological outlooks, forecasts of energy production and consumption, and early warnings relevant to the health domain, among others. Building interfaces among stakeholders, including national weather services, will facilitate climate-smart decisions in critical sectors. This will enable the reduction of the impacts of climate-related disasters, improvement of food security, health outcomes and efficient water resource management.

Mainstreaming climate information, products and predictions for addressing climate change and variability in planning and decision making processes would significantly improve operations, adaptation and risk management. These emerging needs will become more prominent over time and the climate information delivery mechanisms will be increasingly called upon to support relevant interfaces for the impact models and relevant integrated climate indices in order to make the decision-making processes more beneficial to stakeholders and societies. These

emerging opportunities call for us to work directly with partner agencies, at various levels, including EUMESAT at international level, to access sector specific expertise in furthering its work.

Capacity development is a major cross-cutting pillar of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS). It explicitly addresses institutional, infrastructural, procedural and human resource capacities. We recognize the fact that every capacity development activity should be inclusive, be sustainable, and dynamically evolve to meet emerging requirements. We further recognize the need to learn from those who are ahead of us with the overarching goal of strengthening capacity development in our region within the GFCS and achieving standardized methods and tools for climate services.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The partnerships in satellite remote sensing are extremely important and we truly value the cooperation with EUMETSAT, which we can trace back to the 1970s with the operation of the first generation of satellites. Africa is currently making use of the higher resolution, 15-minute images from the Meteosat Second Generation satellite. The Third Generation satellite is expected in 2019, with an even higher resolution to resolve on greater detail and in response to the emerging user needs. The contribution of EUMETSAT to African meteorology is truly invaluable and we are truly grateful to EUMETSAT, Dr. Ratier. I have noted with keen interest the immense contribution by EUMETSAT and the evolution in African satellite meteorology from the times of the Preparation for Use of MSG in Africa (PUMA) and later African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) moving on to Monitoring of the Environment and Security in Africa (MESA). The time has arrived now when the continent is developing its own Space Policy to use space science and technology to derive socio-economic benefits and to develop and maintain indigenous infrastructure and capabilities that service the African market. We trust that this partnership with EUMETSAT, the European Union and other partners will continue to flourish and we will complement each other's efforts.

Programme Director,

I would now like to draw the attention of the forum to the African Ministerial conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET) Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services) which pointed out the shortcoming that, although Africa utilizes numerical weather prediction and satellite derived products, there was limited involvement in the design of these products by the region itself. Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot over-emphasize the importance of the local knowledge and experience when designing projects. Any scientific basis of developing products will need the local or regional knowledge to improve its accuracy and relevance. This Forum is an excellent opportunity to address this challenge. We have experts from all over the continent together with our partners gathered here today until the end of this week. I call upon you all to work together and address how the continent will actively participate not only as a consumer, but also as a designer of these satellite products. To do this, we will need to comprehend the bigger picture, respect one another and work extremely hard in a collaborative manner. In this regard, I also call upon you regional experts to actively participate in the African Global Earth Observations System of Systems (AfriGEOSS). AfriGEOSS was launched in 2012/13 to provide a platform for African countries to share knowledge and participate in global GEOSS collaborations and enhance the Africa-wide knowledge base through Earth Observations. Another similar initiative is the 10<sup>th</sup> International African Association of Remote Sensing of the Environment (AARSE) Conference which will be held here in Johannesburg from 27<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014. Returning back to the AMCOMET strategy, I will also call upon the WMO to ensure that this satellite data is channeled through the regional WMO Integrated Global Observing System and the WMO Space Programme to ensure its accessibility and international exchange.

In summary, distinguished guests, I would like to emphasize following three points:

- International collaboration is critical both amongst the States and also with EUMETSAT;

- Capacity building is essential for infrastructure development and expertise in satellite meteorology; and
- Technology transfer and knowledge sharing are of vital importance to deal with the enormous challenge of climate change.

The implementation of the GFCS will require continued cooperation amongst us all to address the user-needs, technology transfer, capacity building and resource mobilization. The development of climate services is critical for our fight against poverty and efforts to combat the adverse effect of natural disasters that continue to oppose the development gains of our continent.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, in line with South Africa's keen interest in meteorology, its impacts on almost every facet of life and the central role which WMO plays in this, the South African Cabinet has endorsed the candidature of Mr. Jerry Lengoasa for the WMO Secretary General position. Our National Department of International Relations and Cooperation has been circulating formal government notifications calling on your support during the 17<sup>th</sup> WMO Congress elections in 2015 for Mr. Lengoasa. We are convinced that, from his own vision of the WMO and his impeccable record from the time he served as the Chief Executive Officer of the South African Weather Service and within the WMO as both the Assistant Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General, he will lead the WMO to greater heights to serve all its members with a particular focus on the unique development challenges facing our own region. I therefore call upon your support for this African Union-endorsed candidate, in the race for the new Secretary General position during the 17<sup>th</sup> WMO congress.

I thank you.