



EUROPEAN UNION
Delegation to the African Union
Head of Cooperation

---- To be checked against delivery ----

1st MESA Forum

Opening Ceremony

Nairobi, Kenya, Crowne Plaza Hotel

Monday 31st of August 2015, 9.00 am

Statement by **Mrs. Anna BURYLO**
Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to the African Union

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Excellency Hon. Professor Judi Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kenya;

Your Excellency Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, the AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture

Your Excellency Jean Claude de l'Estrac, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission;

Your Excellency Ambassador (Eng) Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

Distinguished representatives of

- the ACP Secretariat,
- the African Union Commission,
- the African Ministerial Bodies (AMCOMET, AMCOW, AMCEN,...)
- the Regional Economic Communities (SADC, CEMAC, ECOWAS, IGAD, IOC and SADC) and their Implementation Centres (AGRHYMET, BDMS, CICOS, ICPAC, MOI, University of Ghana and ACMAD)
- the African and European member states and agencies, international partners,

Dear colleagues from the European Union

Distinguished participants, All protocol observed,

Good morning!

Asubuhi Njema!

1. On behalf of the European Union, let me first thank the Government of Kenya, the African Union Commission and the IGAD, for hosting and organising this event. I also wish to thank the Executive Secretaries of the IOC and the IGAD for taking part in this 1st MESA Forum, it highlights the strong interest of the African Regional Organisations in the programme and their commitment towards its success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. In a globalized and rapidly changing world, environmental information is of crucial importance. It helps understand how our planet and its climate are changing, the role played by human activities and how all this will influence our daily lives.
3. Earth observation applications provide this information, and this is exactly what the MESA programme that gathers us today is about.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. We know that Africa's population of around 1 billion will double by 2050. Demographic growth, if supported by education and job creation would be able to boost economic performance and transformation. Such demographic changes bring about both opportunities and challenges. Demographic growth is also estimated to affect natural resources which will come under pressure, possibly magnified by the impacts of climate change, including biodiversity loss, land degradation, etc. To sustain growth and accelerate transformation, African economies will have to prepare for those new global conditions. Unlike countries that industrialised earlier, African economies face the challenge of structural transformation in a global context of climate change and as you all know, Africa is particularly vulnerable to climate change.
5. The related challenges must be taken into account in African development strategies. The well-being and security of future generations are more than ever dependent on the decisions being made today on environmental policies. To take the right actions, decision makers, businesses and citizens must be provided with reliable and up-to-date information on how our planet and its climate are changing.
6. This is with that background that African and European leaders had reconfirmed their commitment during the last EU-Africa Summit in April 2014 to continue working

together towards the establishment of a coherent framework for the development of Earth Observation activities in Africa so that space strategically contributes to Africa's socio-economic development. Both (African Union and European) Commissions have also specifically addressed this commitment during the last meeting in Brussels earlier this year, with the endorsement of a specific roadmap for the implementation of the "*Global Monitoring for Environment and Security and Africa*" initiative on earth monitoring with a view to enhance access to earth observation data for policy makers. MESA is an important building block of it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. The Canadian Astrophysician Hubert Reeves said "*Personne ne sait comment sont exactement les choses quand on ne les regarde pas*" (in English: "*Nobody knows how things look like before looking at them*"). We have nowadays powerful tools being put in place and data being made available to increase our knowledge through earth observation. In fact, with our successive programmes PUMA-AMESD-MESA, but also Copernicus and "GMES and Africa" initiatives, we are doing this.
8. However, another astronomer, Nicolaus Copernicus, said a few hundred years earlier: "*To know that we know what we know, And that know that we do not know what we do not know, that is the true knowledge*". This quote should stimulate us to improve our earth observation technologies and applications to best serve people in dealing with environment and climate change challenges.
9. I know that many success stories will be shared at this Forum on how MESA and other initiatives contribute to these objectives and by also highlighting their huge potential for innovation, growth and job creation.
10. In terms of progress in the MESA programme implementation and just to add a few figures to these opening remarks, I wish to highlight that most of the commitments are now on track to deliver (a little less than two years before the end of the Programme) and with a rate of commitment of the EU contribution to date of ~98%, representing an amount of more than 36 Mo€ mobilised out of the 37 Mo€ dedicated to the project.
11. MESA is also an important building block of the "*Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Africa*" initiative, which was officially launched under the Joint EU - Africa Strategic Partnership (JAES) in December 2007, during the 2nd EU-Africa

Summit in Lisbon. The European Commission has allocated 40 Million Euro under the "Pan African Programme" to the initiative and the project is expected to start in 2016. This Forum is part of the steps agreed by the African Union and European Commissions during the last College-to-College meeting, as an opportunity for presentation of the GMES & Africa program to the stakeholders. We trust that the sessions foreseen at the end of the week will also allow us to move one important step further towards the implementation of the programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I am convinced that this Forum is a particularly important place to allow us to get to know each other better and to streamline the MESA potential that will be showcased during the Forum, towards informed policy making and planning in support of improved environmental governance. It is really fantastic to see so many representatives of various organisations and institutions from Africa and from Europe and I trust that this Forum will offer a great opportunity for rich exchanges of experience.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. Let me finish these opening remarks by quoting the immensely regretted Mrs. Wangari Muta Maathai who said: *"When resources are degraded, we start competing for them, whether it is at the local level (where we clash over land and water), or at the global level, where we are fighting over water, oil, and minerals. So one way to promote peace is to promote sustainable management and equitable distribution of resources"*.

14. So let's do all efforts for MESA to contribute effectively to these greater objectives.

15. I wish you fruitful deliberations and all the best for the proceedings of this Forum, thanking again the Government of Kenya, the AUC, the MESA teams and all stakeholders for its organisation.

Thank you very much!

Asante Sana! Kuwa na siku nzuri!