

Launch of the Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA)

Gaborone, 11 July 2014

**ADDRESS BY THE HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO BOTSWANA
& SADC- AMBASSADOR GERARD McGOVERN**

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to welcome you all to this official launch of the Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa ("MESA") Project for the Southern African Region. First and foremost, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Botswana Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism for organising this event and I especially commend the location here by Gaborone dam.

As you all know, climate change is a major threat to life on our planet. Islands that are today populated risk to disappear, low lying coastal areas and major cities on river mouths around the world face the danger of serious flooding. Dams and rivers will run dry and food shortages and the spread of disease will affect all of us, unless according to the UN panel, we lower our CO2 emissions and conserve our dwindling resources. Africa is one of the world's most vulnerable regions in this regard and negative impacts are already manifest in many sectors such as food production, health and water.

The negative effects of climate change can, if unchecked, unhinge the very peace and prosperity for which we all strive.

Our ancestors, by interpreting the signs of nature have achieved remarkable feats of survival over the millenia. But in a much more crowded and fast-moving world we need more adapted tools to manage the environment in which we live. These days we benefit from accurate weather forecasting that is essential for our modern world to function effectively thanks to Earth observation technology using satellites. I am happy to say that the EU has been supporting its African partners for over a decade to build their institutional, human and technical capacities, and to establish the necessary infrastructure to interpret the information made available by satellite technology.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

EU support has essentially taken place in three phases starting in 2001 when the EU funded a project known as PUMA. It was the first pan-African initiative in support of Earth Observation technologies for meteorological purposes. Thanks to the PUMA project, many national meteorological centres in Africa are now able to use satellite images for their daily weather forecasting.

Some six years later, the “Africa Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD)” programme (Euro 21 Million/Pula 250 million), took the aims of PUMA project to another level by extending Earth Observation technologies to environment and climate monitoring applications. The programme made an important contribution to strengthening the capacity of the continent's national meteorological and hydrological services to use Earth Observation data.

Distinguished Guests,

And so the programme that we are launching today is the third phase in a long history of EU support to the use of Earth Observation for Climate and Environmental monitoring in Africa. The MESA project goes a step further than its predecessors and focuses on data and information products for environmental management and sustainable development. MESA in fact sits in a wider framework known as the Joint EU-Africa Strategy on Climate Change. It is also a key contributor to the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (GMES) initiative which aims to strengthen cooperation on Earth Observation between Europe and Africa.

At the Southern African region level, this new project amounting for €uro 4.5million/Pula 54 million will provide tools to help the countries of the region to better deal with threats to agricultural production and food security, and mechanisms to reduce risk and be better prepared to cope with drought, flood and wildfire.

Honourable Minister, distinguished Director of BDMS

This new ambitious programme could only have come about with the active collaboration of a strong, dedicated host agency, in this case the BDMS which, I should, add falls under the leadership of the Botswana Ministry of Environment.

I am confident that BMDS, this centre of excellence and implementing partner of this new project, will be able to reach the ambitious objectives set in this new partnership.

Today's event marks the start of a project with great potential to contribute significantly to sustainable development in the SADC Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This launch is also a true reflection of the EU commitment to support regional integration throughout the African continent. I am pleased to say that we are currently working with the wider Eastern and

Southern African and Indian Ocean region on a new regional integration programme to the tune of Euro 1.3 billion/Pula 15 billion to run up to 2020. This will provide support for peace and security, intra-regional trade and natural resources management including Agriculture and Food Security.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the SADC Secretariat, the African Union Commission and the Government of our host country Botswana and all of the SADC countries that the European Union is fully committed to supporting the implementation of MESA and to ensuring its success. I trust that this launch will provide a glimpse of what can be expected from the MESA initiative in the SADC region, and I hope that we will all go away from this event feeling more secure about our planet, more confident about our future and the future of our children.

Thank you /Merci beaucoup/Muite abrigado/Ke a leboga

