



INTERNATIONAL ASTRONAUTICAL FEDERATION

REPORT

3RD INTERNATIONAL MEETING FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENTS

Cape Town, South Africa, Sunday 2 October 2011

connecting space people

How far deep underground can the satellite see?

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Written by Ph. Willekens, on notes from Stephanie Finnvik

15 December 2011

17 Member of National Parliaments from eight countries met in Cape Town, South Africa, on Sunday 1 October 2011. For the third time, the International Astronautical Federation experienced this type of meeting involving law-makers from around the world to exchange information and discuss about the use of space technology for Terrestrial applications, in particular for developing countries.

The format is rather informal and provides the Parliamentarian a unique opportunity to spend half a day listening to high distinguish speakers from the space sector, followed by an open discussion among peers. The one-day workshop is organised the day preceding the opening ceremony of the annual International Astronautical Congress in such a way the MP takes benefit from the various professional and social contacts with world space leaders from space agencies and industry.

Among the general goals of the meeting is awareness raising and dialogue between MP who have a role in Senate or National Assembly's various committee related to science and technology.

How far deep underground can the satellite see? asked Joanne Marie Fubbs, chair of the Trade and Industry Committee of the South African Parliament. Just a few millimeters responded Volker Liebig, Director of the Earth Observation Programme at the European Space Agency. But then how can you identify the underground water flow? carried on Dr Sizani representing the committee on Rural Development and Land in South African Parliament. You induce the model, you extrapolate, continued Dr Liebig. But how do you make sure the people who need to know this can read and understand the data? asked Prof Masmoudi, former Minister of Information and representing the Speaker of the Tunisian National Assembly. There is no standard language with remote sensing data, you need to be trained, concluded Ms Fubbs. Scientists from Africa should access the data from satellites and develop their own ability to make these understandable and widely available throughout the country she added.

Floods and Earth quakes have no boundaries, no frontiers, Tsunami do not stop at the boarder or select one country's beach instead of another. So you need to join forces and share resources to be able to predict, and if not at least mitigate the disaster, stated Senator Wilbur Ottichilo who attended the meeting in both capacity of Member of the Committee on Earth Observation (CEO) and Member of the Kenyan National Assembly. Cooperation is essential. Cooperation is not only the prerogative of

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space fairing nations; Kenya, South Africa, Algeria and Nigeria are putting their resources together for building a satellite constellation named the ARMC the African Resources Management Constellation.

The discussion animated by moderator Uli Bobinger covered most of the day. It gathered 17 MPs from 8 countries from all continents. The objective of the IAF initiative is to offer lawmakers from around the world, an informal framework to exchange views and knowledge on the use of space technology for Earth applications. After two successful pilot meetings in Daejeon, Republic of Korea in 2009 and in Prague, Czech Republic in 2010, IAF decided to pursue the organisation of such a meeting every year on the day preceding the annual International Astronautical Congress.

The first meeting addressed Climate Changes; the second was about using space technology to manage natural disaster and this year's topic is "The use of space technology for water, food and energy resource management". The meeting subjects are selected as they are highly relevant to day-to-day citizen's concerns.

Can Space contribute in a better understanding and use of our natural resources? Once the countries are convinced, are they going to invest in the long term? Yes, answered Klaus-Peter Willsch, Chair of the Aeronautic and Astronautic Commission of the German Parliament, but investment in space is not the exclusivity of the most advanced countries. In Europe, with ESA continued Karlheinz Kreuzberg, Head of ESA Director General's Cabinet, 1 euro invested by 1 country gets 85 cents back to its space industry. So the mechanism is clear: the more you invest, the more you get, the more you develop your industry, the more you benefit. The discussion among the MPs carried on with fundamental questions such as the one raised by Senator Robert Ajayi Borroffice, former Head of the Nigerian Space Development Agency, now being part of the Nigerian National Assembly: We need sustainability. We don't necessarily need to invest in satellite, but in data management and data interpretation. For we need to educate our own people to use the data in a sustainable way. The data should be freely accessible, especially for public health, education and security.

Director General of the European Space Agency Jean-Jacques Dordain wrapped up the day as guest speaker of the evening dinner in recalling participants, Bill Anders's famous quote when returning from the Moon circumnavigation aboard Apollo 8 in December 1968: "We came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth"

Twenty-five centuries before, Socrates anticipated the thought stating "Man must rise above the Earth - to the top of the atmosphere and beyond -- for only thus will he fully understand the world in which he lives."

List of participating Parliamentarians

Mr Pavel Hojda, Czech Republic

Deputy, Parliament of the Czech Republic

Mr Klaus-Peter Willsch, Germany

Chairperson European Interparliamentary Space Conference

Prof. Sergio Vetrella, Italy*

Councillor for Industry and Transport of the Campania Region, Italy

Sen Wilbur Ottichilo, Kenya

Member of the Kenyan National Assembly, Emuhaya Constituency

Sen Prof. Robert Ajayi Boroffice, Nigeria

Senator, National Assembly of Nigeria

Sen Dr Ahmed Ibrahim Lawan, Nigeria

Senator, National Assembly of Nigeria

Mr Anton De Waal Alberts, South Africa

Member of the Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry

Ms Joanmariae Louise Fubbs, South Africa*

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry

Mr Ndabakayise Erasmus Gwabaza, South Africa

Member of the Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry

Mr Mlungisi Johnson, South Africa

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Hon. K.A. Moloto, South Africa

Whip of the Portfolio Committee on Energy

Dr Eugene Nhlanhla Nqaba Ngcobo, South Africa

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Science and Technology

Hon. SJ Njikelana, South Africa

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Energy

Hon. G Selau, South Africa

Member of the Portfolio Committee on Energy

Mr PS Sizani, South Africa

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Rural Development and Land

Mr Prasongsak Boondej, Thailand

Advisor of Committee on Science, Technology, Communications and Telecommunications, Senate of Thailand

Mr Mustapha Masmoudi, Tunisia

Chairman of the Tunisian Association for Communication and Space Sciences

Speakers

Prof. Volker Liebig, Germany

Director of Earth Observation Programmes, European Space Agency

Dr Philomen Mjwara, South Africa

Director General Department of Science and Technology (DST)

Sen Dr Wilbur Ottichilo, Kenya

Member of the Kenyan National Assembly, Emuhaya Constituency

Introduction and Purpose of the Event

Dr Karlheinz Kreuzberg

Moderator

Mr Uli Bobinger

*Parliamentarian Co-Chair of Meeting

