

"Africa calling – any takers?"

The European Satellite Operators Association tells the Parliament Magazine how satellites can help the African problem.



In Europe it's the 'Blackberry'; in Scandinavia it's TV via mobile phone (DVB-H), in India it's the 'Reva' (India's first electric car); all around the world, new technologies are setting the pace for the next generation, yet Africa is sadly left behind. It still struggles to satisfy basic human needs for its population like clean water, sufficient food, basic education and literacy, health care and so on.

The problems Africa is facing have been clear to the world for a long time and much has been done to try to remedy them. However experience has shown that financial support may lessen the burden but doesn't offer a lasting solution. What Africa needs is health for its people, trade for its economy, and education for every generation to ensure that development is sustainable.

European Satellite Operators believe that satellites offer the enabling technology for the solution of some of the problems Africa faces. Satellites are a means of electronic communication which offer services such as e-Learning, e-Health, e-Commerce and entertainment. Whether by providing collective access to the masses to Internet connectivity through cyber-points or by equipping local medical centres and hospitals with computers for telemedicine, they are an instrument to communicate

valuable information to accelerate social and economical development. The greatest advantage of this technology is its ubiquitous coverage with a single piece of infrastructure. For a land mass that has very little terrestrial infrastructure, the cost-effectiveness of this solution is not in dispute.

Satellite is therefore an obvious solution to a clear problem. The G8 is making a start but ESOA believes the European Union can add momentum by supporting schemes to enable delivery of satellite communications services in Africa.

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