



Africa calling - but will Europe's decision-makers take the call?

The European Satellite Operators Association says there's never been a better time to connect the African continent, than now!

Just as the economies of former soviet bloc countries accelerated with investment in their telecoms infrastructure, so too could Africa, particularly now with the spotlight on the continent after the G8 summit - and the focus of the British EU Presidency over the next six months.

Recently The European Commission president announced a 35bn euro development plan for the continent. But how that money is targeted is crucial to the future of the troubled continent - which will not be able to 'trade' - fairly or otherwise - without its foreign investors, entrepreneurs, NGOs and governments being 'plugged in'.

Until now, Africa was 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 African governments are facing have been clear to the world for a long time. However, experience has shown that financial support may lessen the burden but doesn't offer a lasting solution.

Africa needs health for its people, trade for its economy, and education for every generation to ensure that development is sustainable.

The European Satellite Operators' Association (ESOA) believes 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 invaluable instrument to communicate information to accelerate social and economical development.

Why satellites?

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. If Europe's MEPs - together with the European Commission - are serious about letting Africa trade its way out of its problems, then let's at least give it the essential communication tools, now!

Contact:

Mrs. Aarti Holla-Maini
Secretary General
European Satellite Operators Association
20th Floor, Bastion Tower
5 Place du Champ de Mars
B-1050 BRUSSELS
Tel: 00.32.2.550.3575
aholla@esoa.net
www.esoa.net

