



# Africa Reclaims Satellite Orbital Resources in the International Telecommunications Union's Broadcasting Satellite Service Plans

In February 2020, the African Telecommunications Union (ATU), a specialised agency of the African Union (AU) in the field of telecommunications, in partnership with the Government of Kenya through the Communications Authority of Kenya held a Special Workshop attended by 27 Member States to create formal notices to acquire new satellite orbital resources and associated feeder-link resources.

During the workshop, affected countries created the notices pending formal submission in the prescribed manner to the ITU Radiocommunication Bureau between 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020. Whereas the workshop was attended by 27 of the 31 affected countries, the countries present stepped-in and generated the notices on their behalf. This was a remarkable display of the "Umoja wa Africa".

According to the African Space Industry Report - 2019 Edition, the African space economy is now worth USD7bn and is projected to grow at a 7.3 per cent compound annual growth rate to exceed USD10bn by 2024.

The continent still lags in reliable internet access, radio service, global positioning system use among other satellite-related services. Nonetheless, the continent is poised to benefit from more satellite usage such as in geospatial service. Recent studies suggest the geospatial services sector generates USD400bn in revenue and creates around 4 million jobs per year globally.<sup>1</sup>

According to Esther Ngumbi, an entomologist and senior fellow at the World Policy Institute, satellite data can be used to guide sustainable development in Africa to tackle some of the challenges that continue to affect the continent, including declining soil health, climate change and invasive insect pests such as the fall armyworm<sup>2</sup>.

The workshop was held at the Intercontinental Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020. It was an exceptional case approved under the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-19) Agenda Item 1.4 (Resolution 559 (WRC-19)) following one of the ATU common proposal to WRC-19. ATU petitioned for compensation to the affected African countries of currently planned satellite resources which have been overtime rendered unusable due to interference from other networks.

The new satellite resources are of immense social-economic value to the broadcasting sub-sector. In monetary terms, the new resources would collectively be valued in millions of United States dollars that will greatly impact the growth of the African economy.

1 Geospatial World (2017) <https://www.geospatialworld.net/blogs/economic-impact-geospatial-services-need-know/> Accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

2 Quartz Africa (2018). <https://qz.com/africa/1343132/african-space-programs-will-boost-development-with-satellite-data/> Accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020.