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## Science, ICT & Space: African Union Commission and European Commission launch 6 "lighthouse" common projects

Science and Technology are key to developing solutions to Africa's major challenges. Today, during the EU/ AU College-to-College meeting, EU Commissioner for Science and Research, Janez Potočnik, for Information Society and Media, Viviane Reding, for Enterprise and Industry, Günter Verheugen, and for Development, Louis Michel, agreed with African Union Commissioner for Human resources, Science and Technology, Professor Ezin, that a book of 19 "lighthouse projects" should serve as the framework for implementing the EU/AU Partnership on Science, ICT and Space and its Action plan (called the 8<sup>th</sup> Partnership). Furthermore, they agreed that 6 of these projects are 'early deliverables' and will receive immediate attention.

In a Joint Statement on Implementation of the EU-AU Partnership for Science, Information Society and Space", the Commissioners stress the need to strengthen African capacities in the area of science and technology, including ICT, and infrastructures in order that Africa can produce and use its own knowledge and services and to develop a sound S&T and ICT policy.

This Joint Statement is in keeping with the overall spirit of the EU/AU Joint Partnership, agreed during the EU/AU Summit in December 2007, of working with Africa, not only for Africa: a spirit of partnership. The 19 lighthouse projects have been identified and designed by the African Union Commission (AUC) to respond to African needs. They will help to build the continent's capacities to harness, apply and develop science and technology in order to eradicate poverty, fight diseases, reduce the digital divide, stem environmental degradation, and improve economic competitiveness.

The 6 that have been identified for rapid implementation are:

- In the ICT area, two projects related to enhancing internet deployment and use in Africa (the "African Internet Exchange System"), and to extend the reach of the European research and education high-speed network GEANT to Sub-Saharan Africa ("Africa Connect");
- In Science, two projects aiming at helping African Union to develop its own scientific resources. The "African Research Grants" project will help the AUC to set up an African framework programme for research. In the "Water and Food security in Africa" project, the Nile Basin will serve as a pilot case for research and demonstration activities to tackle food supply problems and effective water and land management.
- In the Space field, the GMES-Africa project aims reinforce Africa's use of, and contribution to, remote sensing science, especially through building of operational systems. A second project will enhance capacity building in the

AUC on Geospatial science. Technology transfer to the AUC will focus on establishing a mirror of the Africa Observatory for Sustainable Development based in Europe's Joint Research Centre (JRC) which provides scientific information on natural resources, food security, crisis management and renewable energies.

The joint statement calls upon the 27 EU Member States, as well as the 53 AU Member States, the industry and the civil society to coordinate their involvement in the 19 projects, and notably define appropriate funding instruments that could come from EU, national, regional or private sources, in order to ensure their successful implementation.

The European Commission and the AU Commission agreed to further use the European 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research (FP7) to broaden African participation notably in the areas of health, environment and climate, energy, agriculture and food, information and communication technologies and space applications. The use of FP7 will come in complement of other EC Development programmes.

### Background

The European Commission (EC) and the African Union Commission (AUC) agreed on an EU / Africa Strategic Partnership during the EU/ AU Summit in Lisbon in December 2007. 8 thematic partnerships were identified, the 8<sup>th</sup> of these being the partnership for Science, ICT, and Space.

The projects have been identified and developed by the African Union Commission on the basis of Africa's development priorities and challenges. They are consistent with Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action developed by the AUC and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and published in 2005.