
Profile of New Sustaining Members

Geoinformatics

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Other News

New Regional Member

Regional Centre for Training In Aerospace Surveys (RECTAS)

Off Road 1, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus
P.M.B. 5545, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

<http://www.uneca.org/rectas> or <http://www.rectas.org>

Contact: The Executive Director

Background Information

The need for a Regional Cartographic Centre was first mooted at the 1st United Nations (UN) Cartographic Conference held in 1963 in Nairobi, Kenya. Consequently, the 8th Session of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of Ministers held in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1964 passed Resolution 164 (VIII) calling for the creation of Regional Centres for Training in Photogrammetry, Photo-Interpretation and Airborne Geophysical Surveys. In 1971, four founding member states (Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal) signed the principal agreement establishing RECTAS. Four other member states joined afterwards, namely: Burkina Faso (in 1981), Mali (in 1982), Cameroon (in 1983) and Niger (in 1984). The Centre was declared open on 21st October 1972 with the then Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Dr. R.K.A. Gardiner, as the first Chairman of the Governing Council.

The Centre was then known as the Regional Centre for Training in Aerial Surveys (RECTAS) until September 1987 when the name was changed to the Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys (RECTAS) with its scope broadened to cover Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing Applications and Cartography, including Geographic Information System (GIS) in keeping pace with the modern day technology. Apart from the training capabilities, these major disciplines have very much strengthened the

consultancy services unit of RECTAS to carry out important and large projects involving mapping, monitoring and management of natural resources and the environment, through the expertise of the professional staff and "hi-tech" facilities available at the Centre.

Objectives of the Centre

The objectives of the Centre are to:

- (i) provide theoretical and practical training in the field of Geoinformatics including in particular photogrammetry, remote sensing, cartography and geographic information systems and their applications in geophysical surveys, environmental studies, natural resources management, mapping, land administration, etc;
- (ii) conduct seminars and courses with a view to providing an opportunity to government officials in the region to exchange information and experiences in the field of Geoinformatics;
- (iii) carry out studies and research in the field of Geoinformatics, and;
- (iv) provide advisory and consultancy services to member states of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and other institutions concerned with geoinformation.

Organisational Arrangement

Under the new policy of UNECA, the Chairman of RECTAS' Governing Council is now elected from among its members to serve for two consecutive meetings in rotation.

The Chief Executive of the Centre is the Executive Director, assisted by a Deputy Executive Director. The Centre is divided into Academic and Research Division, Administration Unit, Account Unit and Audit Unit. The Academic division has six (6) units, namely Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (PRS), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Cartography, Information

Technology (IT), Consultancy, and Library, Information and Publication (LIP).

Education and Training Programmes

RECTAS' courses are bilingual: English and French, and are conducted at three levels of Technician (18 months), Technologist (18 months) and Post-graduate (12 months) for the regular courses.

The modular design of the regular programmes provides opportunity for interested candidates to attend short-term training and retraining in any module or combination of modules of their choice.

To further meet the training needs of Africans, RECTAS and its technical partners, especially ITC have finalised running of joint Masters (M.Sc. degree) programmes in Geoinformatics giving a very good example of north-south co-operation. The first batch of the M.Sc. degree programme has been scheduled to commence at RECTAS in October 2004. This is part of a new structural co-operation between ITC and RECTAS on joint education, research and consulting going beyond the age-long sister-institute relationship between ITC and RECTAS.

The rate of development in geo-information technology (GIT) is so rapid that it is often difficult for staff to be regularly released for retraining to keep pace with technological development. The solution to this problem is to provide web-based distance learning programmes. Internet facility of RECTAS is therefore being strengthened with

financial assistance of the French Embassy in Nigeria. The website is now being upgraded with the completion of the local area network (LAN). This facility will enable RECTAS' alumni and the Geo-information community in Africa to keep abreast with the developments in GIT.

Research Activities

Apart from the above-mentioned examples of joint short-term courses, joint research activities are also undertaken or planned with RECTAS "northern" and "southern" partners.

Support, Consultancy and Advisory Services

As part of its objectives, the Centre has been rendering consultancy and advisory services to member states in the areas of short-term/customised training and production-related jobs.

Training Facilities

In addition to the skilled manpower available in RECTAS, the Centre has modern Digital Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, Geographic Information System, Cartography and Internet Laboratories, which are well equipped with modern hardware and software packages.

Technical Partners

RECTAS' technical partners include: ITC, Enschede, The Netherlands (since inception of RECTAS in 1972; the Centre is a sister Institute of ITC); GDTA, Toulouse, France; CIRAD, France; AGRHYMET Regional Centre, Niamey, Niger and ECOWAS.

New Associate Member

Centre Royal de Teledetection Spatiale (CRTS)

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Rabat
Morocco
Contact: Driss Elhadani

Overview on CRTS' Activities Related to Remote Sensing

Being aware of the economic and social benefits of the use of space technology, Morocco has set up a dynamic, realistic and sustainable policy for the integration of such technology in the national development projects. Thanks to a political will that has been experienced at a high level of authority Morocco has provided itself with the appropriate human and material resources and has put together a national network of competencies and users, particularly in the domains of telecommunications, Earth observation and space meteorology.

Since the nineteen seventies, Morocco started to integrate space technology in its development programs. In the field

of space telecommunications Morocco uses several regional satellite programs and has signed several agreements with International organisations in order to strengthen its capabilities. In terms of communication, of data transfer and information exchange. In order to direct decisions several sectors and for an optimal management of resources in several projects integrating remote sensing have been carried out by a large number of national institutions. The purpose of such projects is to respond to priority needs of the country in terms of the management of natural resources protection of the environment, and land development. The creation of the Royal Center for Remote Sensing in 1989 has contributed to the development of operational applications and integrated projects through the co-ordination of the efforts of all national partners, the setting up of infra adapted to the needs and the creation of a network of co-operation and exchange with foreign partners.

The launch in December 2001, of a micro-satellite confirms the will of Morocco to develop national capabilities for an efficient use of space for sustainable development.

Morocco continues its policy of sensitisation, promotion and extension of the use of space to other domains (space

technologies, space sciences...) by strengthening training and co-operation programs. In fact, conferences, exhibits and information events are organised on a regular basis to sensitise decision makers, officials, scientists and the youth to the contribution and potentials of remote sensing and space sciences and technologies. Within this context, a national committee of remote sensing has been created to co-ordinate the activities of different government departments. This committee publishes a scientific review, "Geo Observateur" which reports the results of works and research, undertaken in developing countries, using satellite data and geographic information systems.

In the field of training, Morocco houses within the Ecole Mohammadia d'Ingénieurs the African Regional Center of Space Sciences and Technologies (in the French language) (CRASTE-LI) which started its activities in 1998 and 3 training sessions on remote sensing telecommunications, and space meteorology were organised since this date. Beside Morocco inaugurated, within the Royal Center for Remote Sensing, a centre for continuing training and proficiency in the fields of advanced technologies. The center has appropriate infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories, documentation rooms, and conference rooms that are equipped for interactive and distance learning) to meet the needs of the countries of the region.

Within the framework of its international policy, Morocco works actively towards the intensification of its international co-operation in the fields of Space Sciences and Technologies. Morocco undertakes different actions to widen its networks and strengthen its North/South and South/South bilateral and multilateral co-operation.

On the regional level, Morocco participates actively in the elaboration and realisation of regional projects particularly in the Euro-Mediterranean Africa and the Middle-East regions. After having organised the MARISY 92 and 95 forums, on the use of remote sensing for the environment

and development for the Africa and Middle-East region, in collaboration with space agencies, regional and International organisations, Morocco hosted the third edition of MARISY in October 2000. This conference, dedicated to the new era of Earth observation and geoinformation, was an opportunity to space agencies users and service providers to debate on ways to enhance information and experience Exchange between the countries of the region. Morocco has also organised several activities in collaboration with regional and international organisations (FAO, EURISY, ESA COI...).

Other international events were organised in 2002. The first was a workshop on Space Law organised by CRTS in collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA). Participants from several African countries are attending this workshop. A symposium on space information for water and drought risks was held in Rabat (Morocco) on 14 and 15 September 2002. This event organised by CRTS in collaboration with EURISY and cosponsored by CNES and ESA, was focused on needs of African countries of space information to combat problems and risks related to desertification and water (flooding). On the 6-8 October 2003 the CRTS hosted the TIGER workshop initiated by the European Space Agency within the CEOS activities to implement the World Summit on Sustainable Development recommendations.

Morocco also gives particular importance to the execution of the United-Nations programme for the application of Space technology. In fact, Morocco is a member of the United Nations Committee for the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (COPUOS) since 1961 and actively takes part in the proceedings of the committee and its subsidiary organs since 1992. Morocco is also the Vice-President Rapporteur of the Committee since 1997 and first Vice-President since 2000. The Kingdom of Morocco has also ratified four of the five treaties concerning to the use of space. The agreement of 1975 on matriculation/registration is under study by the government authorities and specialised instances.

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