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# **Caring for our Planet: Launching a New European Programme for Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security**

*Check Against Delivery*  
*Seul le texte prononcé fait foi*  
*Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

GMES Forum 2008

**Lille, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

Honourable Minister, Honourable Member of the Parliament, Mr. President, dear participants, it is a privilege for me to open the 2008 GMES Forum in Lille.

I would like to express my gratitude to the French Presidency for this event. I welcome the large number of participants, mostly user representatives to this conference.

This Forum is part of a series of events organised by the Presidency that gradually allow us to announce this year the political reply to the request made by Heads of State back in 2001 to establish an autonomous and operational capacity.

Today, I would like to focus my messages on:

- The strategic nature of Earth observation and of GMES as European Space Policy flagships;
- The commitment of the Commission and key actions to ensure an operational GMES especially following our successful ministerial meeting in Kourou; and
- A new name for GMES.

### **Earth observation is strategic and GMES is the means to ensure its sustainability**

Ladies and gentlemen, the Earth is fragile.

We need to understand its evolution to better preserve it and to guarantee the safety of our fellow citizens.

Improving our understanding of the oceans allows us to navigate in a safer way; improving our understanding of the atmosphere allows us to cope with climate change; improving our understanding of the continental surfaces allows us to cope with natural disasters.

Providing autonomously reliable information on the status of the Earth's environment and the impact on security is precisely the objective of GMES.

Since the beginning, GMES has been designed as a user-driven initiative. For this reason, user representatives have been involved in its development from the outset. This should be maintained and even increase in the future.

To respond to user needs, services must be provided on a sustainable basis. Users will only be willing to use GMES services if they know that the necessary information will be provided in the long run.

We must make the best use of existing or planned European infrastructure, avoid duplication and ensure cost-efficiency. Only when existing capabilities are not sufficient, should new developments be launched. This is the case for the space infrastructure developed by ESA, to which we contribute financially.

European policies have a global reach. This is why European decision makers need access to environmental and security information covering the entire planet.

Although this might seem paradoxical at first sight, autonomy of knowledge implies international cooperation.

As GMES services rely on infrastructure beyond European control (for example ground infrastructure installed in third countries) without international cooperation, there is a risk that the necessary information might not be accessible to feed the development of services.

## **Ensuring an operational GMES**

### **Delivering on past commitments**

Let me now take you through the major steps we have taken since the 2005 Communication, to deliver on past commitments.

On the policy side, the Commission worked on the orientations of the 3rd Space Council and achieved an overall consensus on the GMES architecture and governance principles.

A new important step was taken last July, at the spaceport in Kourou, when the European ministers for space affairs express their wishes to reinforce the GMES Earth Observation System to ensure the permanent availability of the data it provides by means of guaranteed long-term funding from the European Union.

On the operational side, the Commission proposed massive research investments for GMES. The 7th European Research Framework Programme allocates 1.2B€ to structure GMES services and its space infrastructure.

In parallel to this, I succeeded in convincing the Council and the Parliament to give the green light for the first operational budget through a GMES preparatory action in 2008. It is my intention to have the same success in the future.

### **Key actions for the future**

How can we progress further and ensure that GMES services are provided on a sustainable basis?

First, I will submit to the College later this year a Communication which will set out our thinking on the future governance structure of GMES.

I will also start preparing a proposal for an operational programme that will formalise the governance and financing arrangements for the current EU Financial Framework. This will also be the basis for the negotiations beyond 2014.

Without wanting to pre-empt the final decision of the Commission, already at this stage 3 main issues stand out:

Firstly, GMES is a true partnership and requires the involvement of many actors. But as the overall endeavour depends on the contribution of each individual, there is a need to formalise this partnership and the commitments of its members.

The role of the Union should go beyond its traditional role of implementation of EU funds. This is why, in my view, the Commission should also ensure the overall coordination of partners at national and European levels.

In GMES I will propose that the Commission should have the central programmatic responsibility as a Management authority assisted by a steering body with Member States and users representatives for its co-ordination tasks and a Programme Committee for the Budget implementation. In addition the Commission will rely heavily on key partners for implementation: the EU agencies and national and intergovernmental institutional centres for services; ESA for space infrastructure development, procurement and co-ordination; on ESA and EUMETSAT for operations and on the European Environmental Agency for the co-ordination of the in-situ component.

Secondly, I believe that GMES services should be made available according to a full and open access principle. Obviously taking into consideration available resources and constraints such as security.

GMES will contribute to growth and job creation, especially for SMEs, only if data and information is shared in the widest possible way. This is why, to foster the development of knowledge based services, GMES should be seen as a public good.

As a result of this full and open access for users, public authorities will have to invest and ensure best value for money.

Thirdly, the funding approach should ensure sustainability. This is the main challenge for the coming months.

If we want to be successful, we have to come up with a convincing case. This is why detailed cost estimates and co-funding principles need to be prepared at European and national level. This should include the costs of GMES to support the operations over the period 2011-2013.

Obviously the costs for the provision of the service depend on their scope. To ensure that the foreseen operational services respond to identified needs we have consulted the user communities. On the basis of these consultations and to have accurate figures and avoid potential problems in the future, I have decided to launch dedicated studies for the services, space and in situ components in co-ordination with ESA for the space component and the EEA for in situ.

At this stage I can already advance that the EU financial contribution will take the form of both an operational programme funded from the EU budget and research funds from the research framework programme. This proposal should be integrated and negotiated at the next financial perspectives.

However, I want to underline that GMES is a shared and distributed system and therefore is and should be co-financed at European, intergovernmental and national levels. Therefore it is essential that before the end of 2009 an overall financing strategy is established providing for specific allocations to the services, space and in situ components of GMES from EU and Member states sources. This strategy should provide for an adequate balance between R&D and operational budgets.

In the meantime and until this long term scenario is developed we also need to establish an operational budget line which will bridge the gap between the end of the preparatory action in 2010 and the new financial perspectives. This will be essential for the continuity of GMES services which have mainly been to date co-financed by research funds.

## **A new name for GMES**

Today, GMES enters a new era and in this new era it merits a new name, a new name that will signal that it is ready for the next steps on the road to sustainable services. I am therefore proud to launch "Kopernikus" as the new European programme for sustainable services based on Earth observation.

Why Kopernikus? Kopernikus, a European personality, was born in 1473 of German parents in Toruń, Prussia. Nowadays, Toruń is in Poland about 160Km south of Gdansk.

He lived and studied in many different European cities. He was a leading scientist of his time and he revolutionised our understanding of the universe. I hope that our Kopernikus programme will equally revolutionise our understanding of the Earth's environment and security challenges.

With this, I would like to wish success to this Forum. I look forward to sharing its outcome in the forthcoming Commission Communication.

In the meantime, I invite you all to watch a brief video on Kopernikus and its work to start getting the feel of the future to come building on the success of the past.