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AARSE 2014 conference feedback

AARSE's 10th international conference was held at the University of Johannesburg Auckland Park campus from 27 – 31 Oct. 2014, hosted by the South African National Space Agency (SANSA) and the University of Johannesburg. The conference focused on ***Space Technologies for Societal Benefits in Africa*** in congruence with the efforts by a number of institutions (such as the South African Department of Science and Technology, DST, the African Union Commission AUC, SANSA, the global Group of Earth Observation, GEO, and continental initiatives such as the Pan African University for Space Science and Technology and AfriGEOSS) *to increase investments and awareness of the use of space for decision making processes and to stimulate African dialogue on the use of space for development, building African capacity in science and technology and promoting continental coordination of space activities.*

The highly successful conference was attended by over 200 participants from 33 countries. The opening speech was given by the Honorable Ms. GNM Pandor, South Africa's Minister of Science and Technology. **The 11 keynotes** of the week-long conference dealt with education, training and geo-capacity building, remote sensing in a changing world, space policy and strategy issues, and geospatial technology for sustainable development in Africa. **130 technical papers** were presented, the majority of which were in the applications and benefit arena. Oral presentations were complemented by a **poster session** with 17 contributions.

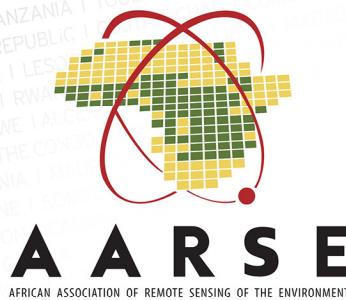
In addition to oral and poster sessions three **technical workshop sessions**, namely on remote sensing capacities of forests (1), the AfriGEOSS implementation plan (2) and the GMES and Africa initiative of the African Union and European Union Commissions (3) provided a platform for discussion and exchange.

Like in previous AARSE conferences an **awards competition for best papers** was again held. For winners and papers see <http://africanremotesensing.org/page-1846750>.

More than 60 full papers were peer-reviewed and will be published in the **AARSE 2014 conference proceedings** coming out before the end of 2014 on the conference website.

In parallel to the scientific program, a week-long **exhibition** comprising national and supra-national agencies as well as private sector companies, showcased latest technology developments, systems, services and products.

Pre-conference events included several technical workshops, outreach workshops for educators and local authorities, a scientific writing workshop and the IEEE GRSS / AARSE summer school on different remote sensing technology sectors. These events were attended by 61 participants and a team of approximately 18 lecturers (local and international) were involved in running and delivering the different courses.



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Moreover, conference participants were offered the opportunity to sign up for an **excursion** to visit the ground receiving station of SANSA's earth observation and space operations in Hartebeesthoek outside Johannesburg.

The **social program** of the conference included a wonderful gala dinner in the beautiful surroundings of the Moyo Zoo Lake restaurant in Johannesburg with African entertainment and culinary delights.

The conference program culminated in the conference **[Johannesburg Declaration](#)**; which emphasizes and calls on Africans to recognise the importance of Earth Observation, Geospatial Science and Technology products in providing the foundation for good governance, economic and social development, and poverty alleviation strategies; as well as with the announcement of **AARSE 2016** to be held in Uganda in Oct. 2016.

AARSE 2014 General Assembly

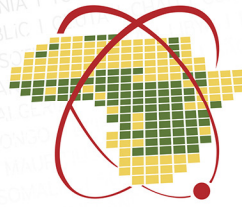
In the course of the conference AARSE also held its general assembly (GA), presented its activity and financial reports and announced its plan to establish a scientific journal on Remote Sensing and Geospatial Science. The president of AARSE also introduced the new members of the **Executive Council** (EC) for acclamation by the AARSE assembly.

The new members of the EC are Prof. Kamal Labbassi (Morocco), Prof. Islam Abou-El Magd (Egypt) and Ms. Bulelwa Semoli (South Africa).

Prof. Kamal Labbassi, up-to-date the association's Councilor for North Africa is the new Secretary General of AARSE. Kamal Labbassi is a Professor at the Department of Geology, University of El Jadida, Morocco, and President of the Moroccan Association of Remote Sensing of the Environment (MARSE) as well as a member of several national and international geoscience networks (full CV on AARSE's website www.africanremotesensing.org).

Prof. Islam Abou-El Magd is the association's new Councilor for North Africa. Islam Abou-El Magd is Associate Professor and acting head of the Department of Environmental Sciences of the National Authority of Remote Sensing and Space Sciences (NARSS), Egypt, a member of the space council of Egypt and of the Egyptian remote sensing society as well as a member of several international working groups on space policy and strategy (a.o.) (full CV on AARSE's website www.africanremotesensing.org).

Ms. Bulelwa Semoli is the association's new Councilor for Southern Africa. Bulelwa Semoli is Director of Imagery and Topographic Data at the Chief Directorate National



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Geo-spatial Information of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, South Africa, and Co-Chair of the SA-GEO Land Cover Community of Practice and an executive member of the Working Group on Land Cover Mapping for Africa representing the Southern African Region (full CV on AARSE's website www.africanremotesensing.org).

In the course of the AARSE General Assembly four **Technical Committees** were set up to support the objectives of AARSE, namely to contribute to advancement in various areas, initiate and coordinate activities and projects, stimulate research, and outreach to respective communities. The four committees focus on **Sensors and Data (1)**, on **Algorithms and Applications (2)**, on **Capacity Building and Outreach (3)**, and on **Economy, Policy and Entrepreneurship (4)** (for details of TORs, coordination and members of the technical committees see AARSE's website www.africanremotesensing.org , members section).