

GMES OPERATIONAL CAPACITY WORKSHOP

OPENING

25-26 MARCH 2010 – 9.30 AM

Mr. Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria
Welcome speech



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this important event – the Operational Capacity Workshop within the European Earth Observation Program – the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security.

While we support the Program, we want to be actively involved in its implementation with the provision of information needed for:

- natural resources and biodiversity management
- environmental monitoring
- response to natural and to man-caused disasters
- efficient border control which is **part of the national policy and infrastructure development which is a Government priority.**

Currently Europe is facing grave challenges. The economic crisis, the climate change, the prosperity of citizens and the knowledge-based society are both Europe's and Bulgaria's priorities. **Common success will largely pivot on cooperation in regional and European context.** In other words, financial commitments and resources that are not small at all will have to be shared: we know that in 2007-2013 the EU commits over 700 million euro to space projects alone.

However, this should not be an end per se. In our view it is a key imperative that the question of **WHO STANDS TO GAIN AND HOW** be put all the time. **Hence my appeal to the participants assembled here to think from the perspective of the end user and to be particularly active in discussions on such matters.**

I admit that when a couple of months ago I was informed about the initiative to organize this workshop by an initiative group comprising public organizations, universities and

research units, it was the word “security” that appealed to me. I perceived the word not just in its conventional meaning but as security for citizens, security for infrastructure, security for investment and security for nature.

As a Prime Minister, that is on behalf of THE USER – BULGARIA, I emphasize on the need of fast provision of information following a natural disaster, incident or industrial accident and also on the need to **strengthen prevention** – preliminary analyses, simulation models and scenarios to indicate the regions and urban infrastructure elements at risk, to estimate damages and to calculate the resource required for the society, economy and finance sector to put in place safeguards to minimize the disastrous consequences.

Disasters have no respect for national borders, so it is of key importance, primarily for neighbor states and for states in one region, to operate jointly. Floods are one example. The same holds true of wild fires, earthquakes and other disasters.

MANAGEMENT OF THE EARTH OBSERVATION PROGRAM

In my view the program management should be combined: centralized and decentralized. While the establishment of a space infrastructure and constellations of satellites calls for centralized management, **the management of ground infrastructure and services, especially security-related infrastructure and services calls for active involvement of member-states organized in regional networks.** I find this approach particularly crucial for regions that are an external EU border like Bulgaria.

We highly appreciate our cooperation with the European Commission and in particular with GD Enterprise and Industry, DG Research – Joint Research Center and leading European organizations like the European Space Agency, the European Environment Agency, EUMETSAT and other that supported the Sofia workshop.

There is a prospect for close cooperation with the European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response. We highly appreciate the European Commission’s support to the priority that we proposed: support to EU-12, that is, the twelve new EU member states, so as to enable them to participate more actively. This is support to our stated position: we want to team up with our EU partners for the benefit of the common policy and operational implementation rather than seek, one by one, a better niche to occupy.

I will illustrate how seriously Bulgaria takes this policy with two examples:

- On 10 March the Council of Ministers took a decision to support the GMES Program and to put in place the infrastructure needed to coordinate activities nationally;
- A week ago the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism was assigned the Space Policy. Bulgaria has accepted the reality of space which is no longer associated with space research alone; it is now a solid business, a field for advanced technology transfer and a component of the wheel to steer the course of the Earth nationally and globally.

I can speak a lot about the workshop agenda items. However, today we have a cabinet meeting which opens in a couple of minutes. Therefore, I suggest **this meeting to become an annual event so that we monitor more efficiently the European Program implementation.**

I wish success to the workshop with the common positions that it will achieve to the benefit of all of us, citizens of Europe.

Thank you!