

Global Dialogue on Emerging Science and Technology 2008

Geospatial Sciences for Sustainable Development in Africa

Opening Remarks

Helen La Lime

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On behalf of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in the Republic of South Africa, I am most pleased to welcome this distinguished group of scientists to our GDEST Conference highlighting research and collaboration efforts on geospatial science and technology in Africa.

This conference is part of an initiative led by the Office of the Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State, in partnership with the State Department's Office of the Geographer and Global Issues and – I'm pleased to say – the University of Cape Town's Division of Geomatics.

This initiative, called the Global Dialogue on Emerging Science and Technology – GDEST – is designed to focus on specific areas of emerging scientific developments in different regions of the world.

Within the GDEST framework, the Department of State has conducted a series of bi- and multilateral visits and conferences that have examined advanced and advancing science and technology in various different host countries and regions. This is the first GDEST program that has come to Africa, and the first one to address the geospatial sciences.

Over the next few days, you will examine three key themes related to the application of geospatial science and technology:

1. Observing Africa,
2. Analysis of regional challenges to Africa, and
3. The African data stream.

The purpose of our GDEST activities is to facilitate interactions between and among leading U.S. scientists and their counterparts – with a special emphasis on involving young investigators. As participants in the GDEST conference, we hope you will consider this your personal mandate – to interact with your colleagues from the U.S. and Africa throughout the course of these next three days and to continue this dialogue after the conference is over.

You have a busy schedule, so I do not want to take up any more of your time with my welcoming remarks, but in closing, I so want to thank those who have worked hard to bring this year's GDEST to Cape Town:

1. Dr. Julian Smit of the Division of Geomatics at the University of Cape Town – who led the local efforts here as our collaborator and partner;
2. Ms. Rachel Warner of the Department of State – who pulled together all the details of this conference from Washington, not an easy task given that there are nearly 20 different countries and an equal number of institutions represented here; and
3. Mr. Paul Bartel of the Humanitarian Information Unit in the State Department's Office of the Geographer and Global Issues, Department of State – who worked to gather the eminent group of scientists and practitioners who are gathered here today.

I wish you good luck in your discussions, and trust that this dialogue will both cement the bonds that already exist as well as lead to new partnerships and collaborations among the specialists gathered here in this room today.

Again, welcome to Cape Town. Learn from each other during the conference. And come away from GDEST 2008 full of ideas and energy to work with your global colleagues.

