

Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement Signed between Deqing iSpatial of China and Aquila Eyes Group of Tanzania

--- Building a New Bridge for China-Africa Cooperation in the Field of Surveying, Mapping and Geospatial Information

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On the 30th of April a ceremony for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between AQUILA EYES GROUP LTD (AQUILA), MOROGORO, TANZANIA and DEQING ISPATIAL CO, LTD(iSpatial), DEQING, CHINA. The ceremony was held online via Tencent Meeting (VooV meeting).

The ceremony began with brief introductory remarks from the host, Prosper Washaya, on behalf of both Aquila and iSpatial. The host acknowledged the presence of distinguished guests including Prof. John Van Genderen (Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) of the University of Twente, Netherlands), Prof. Orhan Altan (Istanbul Technical University, Department of Geomatics Engineering, Turkey), Professor Timo Balz (Wuhan University's State Key Laboratory for surveying, mapping, and remote sensing), Dr. Craig Honcock (Associate Professor of Geospatial Engineering at Loughborough University, UK.), Dr. Fanan Ujoh (Department of Geography & Environmental Management, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria), Mr. Ruhong Yao Yao (Director of Deqing Geospatial Information Town, Moganshan High tech development Zone).

After a brief summary of the purpose of the MoU, the host gave the floor to the representatives of the two companies to briefly introduce their companies. Dr Sumari started by thanking all the participants and then went on to introduce her company and the opportunities that the MoU agreement will bring in strengthening international geospatial information cooperation through business, projects and consultancy. Dr Sumari also highlight the role that the MoU will play in opening doors for developing countries like Tanzania to take part in the next exciting phase of geospatial information development and gain new ways or tools to advance sustainable development. Finally, Dr Sumari mentioned that the two organizations also will work together on public outreach programs to increase awareness and understanding of the global benefits that can grow from increased investments in the use of geospatial technologies.

Representing Deqing iSpatial Co., Ltd, the President of iSpatial group, Mr. Hans Ni, gave a short speech introducing iSpatial and the main focus of the organization, i.e., intelligent applications based on Geospatial Information Technologies and Big Data. iSpatial business covers Satellite remote sensing data and services, UAV photogrammetry and LiDAR hardware, software and services, Terrestrial laser scanning and close-range photogrammetry, Marine Surveying and Buoy systems, Indoor and outdoor positioning systems, and GIS solutions. Mr. Hans Ni reiterated Deqing iSpatial's commitment to international cooperation in Africa through Aquila.

The host went on to introduce the main agenda of the ceremony, i.e., signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Aquila and iSpatial. Because the ceremony was held online, both parties could not meet face to face for the signing of the documents, so each party signed from their side and sent a scanned copy for the other party to sign during the ceremony.

After the signing ceremony, the host asked the distinguished guests to give congratulatory remarks to the parties for signing the historic agreement. In his congratulatory message, Prof. Orhan Altan stated that he is confident in the skills of both Aquila and iSpatial and that such a collaboration will bring benefits to both parties involved and that he hopes this will be an example for organizations in other continents to take part in such agreements. Prof Oran also mentioned that the One Belt One Road Initiative has reached Tanzania through the agreement.

Professor Timo Balz from Wuhan University also gave some congratulatory remarks and mentioned he was delighted to have witnessed the signing of the agreement because he is familiar with both parties and their capabilities. In his message, Professor Timo acknowledged the role that Wuhan University played in bringing the parties together. Professor Timo also stated that this is a great opportunity as the geospatial industry keeps growing in Africa and other developing regions.

Dr Craig Hancock also gave his congratulatory message and started by mentioning that even though he is in Britain, there are other two places in his heart, i.e., Africa and China. In his message, Dr Craig acknowledged the willingness and openness of Deqing iSpatial to work with other organizations and that in the past 7 years working with iSpatial, the greatest lesson he has learnt is that collaboration is very important for mutual benefit.

Prof John congratulated the two parties by wishing them great success in their collaboration and he maintained that there are many great opportunities in both Tanzania and China in geospatial training, feasibility studies, demonstration projects etc. Prof John also suggested that to achieve the goals of the cooperation, the parties could also organize “roadshows” in different African countries to introduce their services and activities etc. He also went on to advise both parties to work hard as there is a lot of competition from organizations from other countries.

Ms. Jiang, on behalf of Mr. Ruhong Yao of Deqing Geospatial Information Town, Moganshan High tech development Zone, gave a brief introduction of Deqing’s Geospatial Information Town, where Deqing iSpatial is currently stationed. The Geospatial Information Town is a cluster area with more than 400 geographic technology related enterprises including EV Image, Chinese Academy of Sciences’ Microwave Characteristics measurements laboratory, Wuhan University technology Transfer Centre, AI research Lab for Zhejiang University Etc. The town has produced a complete industrial chain covering data acquisition, processing, application and services.

Dr Sumari then introduced a special guest, Dr Ncube from Zimbabwe currently working in USA. Dr Ncube expressed how proud he was for the achievements made by Dr Sumari and stated that he hopes that other young female academics and professionals could follow the footsteps of Dr Sumari.

Similarly, Dr Fanan Ujoh from Abuja congratulated the parties by maintaining that he hopes that such agreements can expand to other regions of Africa. Dr Fanan mentioned that one of the biggest challenges in Africa is the ability access quality data, which is important in urban planning, environmental

management etc. Finally, he mentioned that in the long run he hopes that such a collaboration will be expanded to countries in west Africa, including Nigeria.

After the congratulatory messages, the host gave closing remarks and ended the ceremony.

All in all, it is time to carry forward this kind of cooperation, which not only is a great approach to develop mutual business both in China and Africa, but also tremendously promotes the realization of the UN 2030 sustainable development goals.

