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Real-time access to orbital optical sensors for disaster early warning: A NATO science for peace sponsored partnership of universities in Morocco, Turkey and the USA

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Abstract

Enhancing the capacity of nations with respect to the early warning of disasters and the management of the sequellae of catastrophic events are essential components to regional sustainable development. The requisite infrastructure and trained personnel are both essential to providing early notification of disasters, such as storms, flooding, forest fires, hazardous chemical and oil spills and even epidemics, through identification and monitoring of infectious disease vector habitat. The need for such capacity building has been recognized by NATO's Science for Peace program, resulting in the award of resources to install two real-time satellite remote sensing ground stations at selected institutions of higher learning in Morocco, Abdelmalek Essaadi University in Tangier and Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. Partnering in this initiative are Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey, which has substantial disaster monitoring expertise; George Washington University's High Performance Computing Lab in Washington, DC, USA and the United Nations GIS Center in Brindisi, Italy. The project, designated as the Mediterranean Dialogue Earth Observatory (MDEO), is being co-directed by Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama, USA, which has 130 years of experience in academic, scientific and agricultural higher education, research and engagement with countries within the African continent.

Biography

Gilbert Rochon is the 6th President of Tuskegee University, since its founding by Booker T. Washington in 1881. He is a member of the Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society, a Senior Member of IEEE and serves as NATO Science for Peace Country Project Director (NPD) for the Mediterranean Dialogue Earth Observatory (MDEO) Project in Morocco. He currently is Chair of the Council of 1890 Universities. Dr. Rochon previously served as Director of the Purdue Terrestrial Observatory, Interim Director of the Laboratory for Remote Sensing (LARS) at Purdue and held successive joint appointments with NASA, USDA Forest Service, Naval Oceanographic Office and the US Environmental Protection Agency. He received his undergraduate degree from Xavier University of Louisiana, the Master of Public Health degree from Yale University School of Medicine and the Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).