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Nigeria Satellite Takes Images of Nigeria, Liberia

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The first Nigeria-owned Earth Observation micro-satellite, NigeriaSat-1, launched into orbit on September 27 2003 from Russia has captured images of Nigeria and Liberia according to Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd (SSTL), builders of the satellite.

The implication of this development according to SSTL, is that all subsystems in the satellite are performing well thereby positioning Nigeria to take advantage of the Standard Disaster Monitoring Constellation (DMC), component of Nigeriasat-1.

Nigeriasat-1 is in constellation (group) of micro-satellites with three other satellites owned by the United Kingdom, Algeria and Turkey. A fifth micro-satellite being built for China by SSTL will also be launched into orbit next year, bringing the number in the group to five.

SSTL further explained that since the launch, all the spacecraft have been "3-axis stabilize nadir-pointing and primary system and imaging payloads have been successfully checked out".

SSTL also revealed that telemetry, (activity of gathering data about remote objects and transmitting it electronically), was received from each of the ground stations of the respective component micro-satellites three hours after launch of the satellites in the United Kingdom, Nigeria and Turkey.

Outlining the benefits of the space investment to Nigeria, SSTL a company formed in 1985 by the University of Surrey in England "to commercialize the result of its small satellite engineering research", stated that the Earth Observation micro-satellite "can be used to support population census and control of malaria directly affecting peoples' everyday lives". The micro-Satellite can ordinarily be used to monitor agriculture, environmental, land resource management and urban planning including "man-made disaster monitoring and mitigation.

It also revealed that being a member of that international constellation, Nigeria will be able to image anywhere in the world within 24 hours as against once in five days if she had Nigeriasat-1 orbits alone. The company stated that although Nigeria spent money on one satellite, it brings a benefit of five satellites

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to the country and a good commercial potential.

With the capability to image scenes as large as 640x560 kilometre, Nigeriasat-1 will provide data, which will be used within Nigeria to monitor pollution, land use and other phenomena. The Professor Sir Martin Sweeting-led SSTL built the micro-satellite with 15 Nigerian scientists in Surrey England within 15 months. The satellite is equipped with "optical imaging payload to provide 32-m ground resolution with exceptionally wide swath width of over 640 km and uses green, red or near infra-red bands equivalent to Landsat bands 2, 3 and 4.

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