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PanAfGeo: Evolution of a milestone in European and African geological collaboration

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There is a long tradition of geological assistance between European and African Geological Surveys, whether through research collaborations, country aid and international donor or funding programmes. However the PanAfGeo programme, which will be officially unveiled at IGC Cape Town in 2016, represents a new and significant development, based on EU Commission support for a partnership of peer to peer capacity building between Geological Surveys, under the auspices of their respective representative organisations, EuroGeosurveys (EGS) and the Organisation of African Geological Surveys (OAGS).

During the African Union Conference of Ministers Responsible for Mineral Resources, entitled “Building a sustainable future for Africa’s extractive industry: from vision to action”, held in Addis Ababa in December 2011 and in 2012, the question was put forward as to whether or not Africa needs a stronger Organisation of African Geological Surveys (OAGS), capable of advising the African Union (AU), as the EGS does for the EU. The response was positive and emphasised that the implementation of the African Mining Vision (AMV) needs to give the OAGS a central role.

This resulted ultimately in a feasibility study, completed in June 2015, into possible partnership as PanAfGeo, including comprehensive analyses of capacity and requirements of 24 African Geological Surveys and an assessment of the means for effective collaboration. The report presented a strategic plan for the sustainable strengthening of geological administrations in Africa. It was jointly prepared by EGS and OAGS on behalf of the European Commission's DG Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) and with the support and additional supervision of DG Enterprise and Industry (ENTR). The scope focuses on one key priority of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy Action Plan 2011-2013, which is to ‘foster further co-operation between African and European Geological Surveys’.

PanAfGeo, which will cover the whole African continent and will involve most of African countries, is expected to be carried out in two three year phases, which will be co-funded by the European Commission and the EGS participants, with an investment of about €12m per phase, focussing on: Furthering the role of OAGS; Geoscientific Mapping; Mineral Resources (including artisanal and small-scale mining); Geohazards mapping and monitoring; Geoheritage Status; and Geoscience Information management and infrastructure.

The specific objectives of PanAfGeo for national Geological Surveys in Africa are:

- Enhance their capacity and role

- Contribute to mineral resource assessment
- Increase their activity in regional mapping and exploration to upgrade geoscientific information base and mineral inventories;
- Strengthen the level of knowledge and skills through training;
- Strengthen OAGS potential to meet the needs of the African continent.

Specifically PanAfGeo will achieve this in a sustainable way through investment in human capital. Besides the European and the African Union, several international organisations, including UNESCO, UNDP, UNECA and AMDC, WB as well as GSAf, will directly provide support and advice.

