

Creating links in Africa

I write this blog-post from Kampala where I am attending the African Association for Remote Sensing of the Environment (AARSE) 2016 conference. This biennial conference brings together researchers and stakeholders from across the African continent. It is my first visit to Uganda and in fact my first visit to Africa! It seems incredible that for all the traveling that I have done over the years, I have not put foot on African soil before now.

This year, AARSE has organised a session devoted to the private sector following the survey of African companies which was completed earlier this year. For the survey, EARSC supported AARSE with the methodology that we use for our survey of the European industry. The results of the African survey can be found [here](#).

After the plenary session where the survey was presented by Tsehaie Woldai and I presented EARSC and how the Association functions, we held a B2B meeting for African and European companies. In my presentation I explained what we do for the companies in Europe and gave a short history of EARSC as well as explaining the challenges that we face. It was intended to provide guidance for African companies seeking to set up their own "EARSC-like" organisation. The biggest challenge which they face is the large geographical scale which inhibits bringing companies together; but this is also an issue in Europe.

The B2B meeting proved very successful. Feedback afterwards was positive with companies from both continents appreciating the opportunity to meet face-to-face and the structured character of the meetings. We learned something about the importance (or difficulty?) of meeting the needs of large and small companies but overall the formula of a matchmaking event seemed to be largely the right one.

I have been pleased that we (EARSC) have been able to help facilitate discussion between African and European companies and to bring some of our experience (for example the methodology for the industry survey) to helping our African counterparts move forward towards a co-operative structure.