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1st EPS/MetOp RAO Workshop Introduction

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The instruments embarked on board the MetOp satellites provide on one hand continuity to the operational sensors which have been flying since long in the NOAA satellites. Such long term data series constitute on its own a very interesting source of information for research in e.g. climate aspects. On the other hand, MetOp also carries on board advanced instruments such as ASCAT, GOME-2, GRAS, IASI and MHS which not only largely fulfil requirements for operational meteorology and climate monitoring, but offer an unique opportunity for innovative research in all the aspects of Earth Sciences.

The aim of the EPS/MetOp Research Announcement of Opportunity (RAO) is to offer to the worldwide scientific community free of charge access to the EPS data and products for the approved projects. Such free data access is also granted to those proposals exploiting the synergy with Meteosat, as well as with the ERS and Envisat data and products.

The European Space Agency (ESA) and the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological satellites (EUMETSAT) announced this opportunity to the worldwide scientific community in June 2004. Candidate Principal Investigators (PIs) were encouraged to submit research proposals using data from the MetOp satellite series on:

- Innovative scientific investigations in areas such as
 - Atmospheric research
 - Land
 - Oceanography
 - Hydrology
 - Climate
 - Calibration and validation
 - Methods

There were in total 50 projects jointly selected by ESA and EUMETSAT in July 2005, following a peer evaluation process initiated in December 2004. A few of such projects were withdrawn, mainly for lack of resources reasons.

The topics addressed in the investigations cover most of the foreseen RAO objectives, many going beyond, particularly for what refers to environmental issues.

Considering their leading role in EPS/MetOP-relevant research, the selected PIs and their Co-Investigators (Co-Is) had access without charge to required real-time and archived MetOp data and products with some priority with respect to other research users. Such data, as well as eventual Meteosat data, will be provided by EUMETSAT, whilst ESA will deliver necessary complementary data from ESA Earth Observation satellites, also free of charge.

This first EPS/MetOp PI Workshop took place at ESRIN premises in Frascati (Italy) on 15-17 May 2006. It started the dialogue between the Investigators and the ESA and EUMETSAT relevant staff. A key objective was to deliver the latest information on the EPS mission objectives, capabilities and plans in order to enable all investigators to optimize their own investigation plans. In particular, attendees were informed about the launch of MetOp-A foreseen for 17 July 2006 from Baikonur. A second objective was to have an overview and initial discussion of the planned investigations, including the associated needs for EUMETSAT (EPS, Meteosat) and ESA (ERS & Envisat) data. A number of recommendations were formulated and will be taken into account by ESA and EUMETSAT.

We hope these proceedings provide a comprehensive overview of the presentations and discussions held during the Workshop, and take this opportunity for thanking all participants for their active and stimulating contributions.

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