

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Ref. COM/ASG/1/1(148)acc

Date: 29th April, 1999

Ms. Marjorie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
445 - 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

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APR 30 1999

Dear Ms. Salas:

Re: Response: In the Matter of Application of AfriSpace Inc., for Authority to Launch and Operate a Satellite Sound Broadcasting Transmission System, File No. CSS-90-017 (IBFS File No. SAT-LOA-19900723-00002); Amendment File No. SAT-AMD-19990125-000016 (Call Sign 52367)

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is very pleased to submit this letter in support of the above referenced application. COMESA was established in 1994 (replacing the former Preferential Trade Area established in 1981). It is an organization of free independent sovereign States, which have agreed to cooperate in developing natural and human resources with a view toward advancing economic prosperity through regional integration. With its 21 member states, a population of over 385 million and an annual import bill of around U.S. \$32 billion, COMESA forms a major marketplace for both internal and external trading. Member States include Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

COMESA has a wide-ranging series of objectives which necessarily include in its priorities the promotion of peace and security in the region. As part of its agenda for 1999 and beyond, COMESA intends to bridge the huge information gap which remains a real challenge to Member States. These problems range from lack of information to poor coverage by the international electronic media. As such, the application of AfriSpace, Inc. that is currently pending before the Federal Communications Commission, is of critical importance to COMESA. The instant coverage afforded by digital satellite communications and the ability of this medium to reach consumers in

rural areas with extensive news and information will assist greatly in COMESA's objectives of creating regional integration.

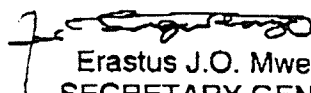
We express our wholehearted support for the AfriSpace application as well as the numerous comments that have been filed in support of the application. We take note and acknowledge in particular the supporting comments that have been filed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Pan African News Agency, as well as the numerous other organizations that have supported the AfriSpace filing.

AfriSpace has made significant strides in its endeavors to create the first digital satellite radio venture to cover Africa. As this vision becomes a reality, COMESA takes pride in recording its support for this greatly needed service. COMESA seeks to create a fully integrated, internationally competitive regional economic community, with high standards of living for all its people. The benefits associated with this new technology are enormous. This satellite will provide educational programming, information on health, agriculture, weather advisories and numerous other types of programming. As such, it will serve as an efficient mechanism for millions of people within the COMESA region as well as the entire continent of Africa to receive up to date critical information.

We are also pleased to acknowledge the partnership of support between COMESA and the United States government, whereby the government confirmed its intention to support COMESA programs through the United States Agency for International Development. These programs include, among others, review of the COMESA Rules of Origin; the establishment of business partnerships between the private sector and that of the United States, and setting up of telecommunications regulatory authorities and telecommunications tariff harmonization. The support extended to COMESA can be seen within the context of the overall United States government's policy in support of Africa, which was articulated by President Clinton during his mission to Africa in March 1998, and re-affirmed in March 1999 during the "U.S.-Africa Partnership for the 21st Century" Conference recently held in Washington D.C.

We look forward to continuing this partnership and bridging the communications gap among the millions of people who currently do not have access to basic news and information. The FCC's grant of the AfriSpace application will play a major role in advancing this historic communications development for Africa and indeed, for the United States. For these and many other reasons, COMESA wholeheartedly supports the grant of the AfriSpace application and urges its prompt approval.

Sincerely,



Erastus J.O. Mwencha
SECRETARY GENERAL