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Opportunities and Challenges for Geosciences and Planetary Sciences Education in Africa - The Grove of Hope Observatory and Educational Project

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Earth, planetary sciences and astronomy have fascinated our children and the public for many centuries. These subjects have always played an important role in teaching physics and natural sciences, especially through observation, hands-on experiments, and workshops. By studying other planets we are able to enhance our awareness of the Earth's uniqueness and the importance of the protection of our environment. Furthermore, our explorations of these new worlds help us to better understand the Earth's evolution and the conditions that supported life.

Grove of Hope Foundation brings together specialists from various educational institutions, science organizations, and space laboratories in the United States, Europe, and Africa. Our specialists will analyze and synthesize the most pertinent approaches of the different products released by space agencies, public outreach and teaching organizations from countries deeply involved in planetary exploration and Earth observation. The development of these products will be performed in accordance with the cultural, financial and social background of the residents from these developing countries. Grove of Hope Foundation will convey its educational message with the use of books, e-learning, Information Technology, outreach programs, workshops, and finally via direct contact with scientists through conferences and videoconference.

All this educational material will be gathered in a center for sciences and techniques. This observatory will be organized in different levels, as a function of historical milestones of our understanding of Earth and space. Visitors and children will be invited

to reproduce the observations and experiments carried out by scientists over the ages to understand our world, as a function of technical progress. Young students especially will be offered the tools necessary to develop their skills and ability to achieve better comprehension of their environment. An emphasis will also be made on high-technology tools and future techniques for Earth survey and space exploration.

Grove of Hope mission is to participate in promoting learning through space and science, help raise the interest of the public in better understanding their environment, and motivate citizens of tomorrow to pursue a career in geosciences and planetary sciences so that they can better manage challenges such as their natural resources and environment.

We will report the progress of our action so far and our perspectives for 2005-2006. We expect fruitful discussion with the community present at the conference and are looking forward to receive its feedback.