Sri Lanka, Item 4

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time I am taking the floor during the current session, let me begin by congratulating you on your election as the Chairman of this august assembly and, in the meantime, expressing our sincere appreciation to the Secretariat, including Mr Niklas Hedman and Director Ms Simonetta Di Pipo for their high standards of professionalism, and commitment, in organizing this meeting under challenging circumstances.

Let me also welcome, on behalf of my delegation, the new States members Dominican Republic, Rwanda, and Singapore, and the new observer Moon Village Association.

Mr. Chairman,

The increasingly important role that Space Technologies and Applications are called upon to play in the achievement of global agenda on sustainable development, particularly the SDGs2030, the Sendai Framework, and the Paris Agreement, needs no emphasis.

In Sri Lanka, our national policies on development are being effectively informed and guided by a clear understanding of the importance of harnessing space-derived data, products, and other space technology based tools, in addressing the challenges of sustainable socio-economic development, while ensuring social equity and environmental sustainability. Space Technology ranks among those key enabling technologies that have been identified, in the relevant national policy-and-strategy documents on science, technology and innovation, as vital areas of advanced technology that the country should leverage upon in realizing its desired economic transformation.

Mr. Chairman,

As regards acquisition and development of national capacity in space technology, we have chosen the path of small-satellites. We have formulated and embarked upon a national programme for acquisition and development of space technology

capabilities through a nano-satellite development programme. This is being implemented by the Arthur C. Clarke institute for modern technologies (ACCIMT), as the nationally mandated state institution for space technologies.

In June 2019, the nano-satellite RAAVANA-I, the first-ever satellite to be developed by Sri Lanka, under the above programme, was launched and deployed into its orbit through JAXA's Kibo module of the International Space Station. The satellite was developed by the Arthur C Clarke Institute, in technology collaboration with the Kyushu Institute of Technology, Japan. The satellite has been successfully operating well over the past two years, transmitting research data from its experimental payloads.

The Arthur C Clarke Institute has also partnered with Kyutech Japan and three other organizations from Japan and Singapore in yet another advanced nano-satellite mission which is expected to be launched in December 2021.

Amongst the other important programmes currently in progress is 'the Establishment of a comprehensive national hub for receiving, processing and distribution of earth observation data from global earth observation satellites', implemented by the ACCIMT. This ground station complex would be open to existing and potential international earth observation satellite operators who would like to partner with us, and benefit, by locating one of their ground stations at this geographically vital location. Sri Lanka, as you know, is situated just above the equator in the middle of the Indian Ocean Region, with no other adjacent landmass to the South right up to Antarctica.

As regards space technology applications, Sri Lanka, as a new entrant to the space domain, has made significant progress in deployment of space technology applications in a diverse range of national programmes spanning the fields of agriculture, environment, natural resources management, water resources, forestry and wildlife, urban development, meteorology and climate change, transport and logistics, and disaster risk reduction—though we are still at an early stage in terms of realizing a state of mature operational use of those applications in the country's efforts in sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka has also been actively engaged in international cooperative initiatives on space technologies and applications, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Sri Lanka has been an active member of the regional space applications programme (RESAP) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). Sri Lanka has served as the Chair of the Intergovernmental Consultative Committee on RESAP on five sessions, since 2011/2012 session, including the currently on-going 2021/2022 session.

Sri Lanka has also been an active member of the United Nations-affiliated regional capacity building initiative, the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, CSSTEAP, located in India, which has made a significant contribution to capacity building in the region. In the meantime, Sri Lanka also views with enthusiasm the opportunity to work in close cooperation with the other UN-affiliated Education Centre in Asia namely RCSSTEAP, based in Beihang University, China.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the measures being currently made by COPUOS towards ensuring long-term sustainability of outer space activities, and I take this opportunity to congratulate and express our confidence in its newly elected Chairman, our distinguished colleague Uma Maheshwaran from India. We also recognize the progress made by the working group on Space 2030 Agenda.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, re-affirming Sri Lanka's commitment to work, within COPUOS and outside, towards its fundamental mission of advancing international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Thank you.