

## **AGENDA ITEM 6B**

### **STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **LSC AGENDA ITEM 6(B): THE CHARACTER AND UTILISATION OF THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT**

Chairperson,

Thank you for the opportunity to place on record the South African position with respect to this important issue pertaining to the character and utilisation of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union.

South Africa recognises that the radio frequency spectrum and associated satellite orbits, including the geostationary-satellite orbit, are limited natural resources, and that they must be used rationally, efficiently, and economically. If this is not done, space activities cannot be undertaken in an equitable manner. It is a fundamental principle that without radio frequency spectrum and associated orbits, space missions are impossible.

South Africa has as the basis of its space policy a commitment to being a responsible user of the space environment, and in line with this we will continue to comply with ITU satellite co-ordination and notification requirements prior to the launch of all our space objects.

Chairperson,

It is important to note that if a scarce natural resource is to be used efficiently, it cannot remain unused. In many frequency bands, access to frequencies and satellite orbits, including the geostationary satellite orbit, takes place according to the principle of “first

come, first served”. Whilst this principle promotes efficient use of the geostationary satellite orbit, it is detrimental to developing countries, and emerging space-faring nations such as South Africa, as it results in difficulties in co-ordinating the use of frequencies and satellite orbits to “latecomers” entering the space arena.

Chairperson;

South Africa recognises that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has made some provision to address the issue of equitable access to the geostationary satellite orbit through the use of satellite plans in which each country is guaranteed access to certain spectrum and a geostationary orbital location for use by fixed- and broadcasting-satellite services.

We are also aware that the ITU Constitution states that, “In using frequency bands for radio services, Member States shall bear in mind that radio frequencies and any associated orbits, including the geostationary satellite orbit, are limited natural resources and in this regard, they must be used rationally, efficiently and economically, in conformity with the provisions of the Radio Regulations, so that countries or groups of countries may have equitable access to those orbits and frequencies, taking into account the special needs of the developing countries and the geographical situation of particular countries.”

This is a noble statement of principle, however, **Chairperson** and fellow delegates; this achieves little, in practise, of ensuring equitable access to the orbit/spectrum resource by developing countries. In this regard, any practical proposal including that of Iran to move on this noble cause is supported.

The ITU developed plans for the broadcasting satellite service in 1977 and for the fixed satellite service in 1988 in an attempt to ensure equitable access to the geostationary orbit for all countries. Some technical and regulatory amendments have been made to these plans over the years, nevertheless, both plans require revision. However, there seems to

be no appetite for such a revision of the ITU Plans, even amongst many developing countries.

Chairperson ,

South Africa is pleased that at the 2019 World Radiocommunication Conference, a Resolution was adopted that enables developing countries to apply for new orbital locations to replace those in the broadcasting satellite plan that have been rendered unusable due to modifications made, primarily by developed countries, since the Plan was developed. It is encouraging to note that similar modifications could be made to the Fixed Satellite Service Plan at the 2023 ITU World Radiocommunication Conference.

In conclusion, **Chairperson**, equitable access to the GSO orbit remains a challenge for developing countries.

Thank you