

**FRICAN GROUP STATEMENT DURING THE SIXTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE
LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE
PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE**

**TO BE DELIVERED BY H.E AMBASSADOR PHILBERT JOHNSON
CHAIR OF THE AFRICA GROUP AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

ITEM 3: GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

20 -31 MARCH 2023

Madam Chairperson,

1. On behalf of the Africa Group, I would like to express my warm appreciation to Ms Nomfuneko Majaja of South Africa on her chairship of the Legal Subcommittee. The Group assures you of its full cooperation and support. *(Agreed)*
2. The Group also expresses its appreciation to the Acting Director of the Office of Outer Space Affairs, Mr Niklas Hedman, for the preparatory work carried out for the 62nd session. *(Agreed)*
3. At the outset, the Africa Group aligns itself with the Statement of the Group of 77 and China. *(Agreed)*

Madam Chairperson,

4. Space-related activities and space-derived data are assuming increasing importance in the application and achievement of the socio-economic goals outlined in the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063. As Africa shoulders a disproportionate burden of global poverty and climate change, space technology holds immense potential for combatting these challenges. *(Agreed)*
5. The African Union Commission (AU) identified space as a flagship project of Agenda 2063 in recognition of the multitude of opportunities it offers for the African continent to realize its social and commercial potential. Accordingly, the Group is pleased to note the signing of the Host Country Agreement between the AUC and Egypt on the African Space Agency. *(Agreed)*
6. The Group also wishes to acknowledge and welcome the growing number of parties to the UN treaties on outer space, and encourages other States, especially African countries, to consider membership to ensure a wider and more inclusive participation. *(Agreed)*

Madam Chair,

7. The Group underscores the peaceful use and exploration of outer space for the benefit of all countries and without discrimination to economic or scientific development. *(Agreed)*
8. The Group also affirms the importance of abiding by the guiding principles of the Outer Space Treaty namely, the peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of all; the principle of exploration and use of outer space on the basis of equality, the principle of the non-appropriation of outer space including the moon and other celestial bodies, and most important, outer space belongs to all mankind and is not the domain of any country. *(Agreed)*
9. In this regard, the Group acknowledges and appreciates the work carried out by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its two Subcommittees in promoting international cooperation on the peaceful use of outer space through the elaboration of United Nations treaties governing outer space activities. The Group recognizes the committee as the only UN forum to discuss peaceful uses of outer space and matters that impact the development of all nations. The Group underscores the importance of preserving outer space for peaceful uses and to avoid weaponization of space technologies and prevent an arms race in outer space.

Madam Chairperson,

10. The Group is also cognizant of the limitations and vulnerabilities space poses for new and emerging space faring nations and emphasizes the importance of affording new space actors, especially from developing countries, opportunities to participate on an equal footing in line with the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty. *(Agreed)*
11. To promote a wider and more active involvement in outer space activities, the Group calls for enhanced inter-regional and international cooperation. The

transversal nature of space applications is a tool for international cooperation. In order to build adequate regional capabilities and sustain an indigenous space sector responsive to our challenges, capacity building and technical assistance remain key factors in knowledge transfer and building expertise. *(Agreed)*

12. Knowledge of space policy and space law is also critical in enhancing the capacity of African countries to play a meaningful role in outer space activities. Space technologies can also assist in empowering women and youth through STEM and the Office for Outer Space Affairs, along with more advanced space-faring nations, are encouraged to continue conducting targeted capacity-building, education and training in space law and policy. The Group also calls for sufficient funds to enable UNOOSA to carry out these initiatives. *(Agreed)*

13. The growing number of space actors, both governmental and commercial, herald opportunities and challenges alike and the Group reiterates that their conduct must fall within the ambit of an international framework of space activities. The security and safety of outer space will only be assured if all activities in the space environment are carried out in accordance with applicable international law, rules, and regulations. The Group is also of the view that any legal framework or norms to be established should not be prejudicial to the interests of developing countries nor limit access to outer space. *(Agreed)*

14. In this regard, the Group is of the view that there should be synergy and coordination between the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee of COPUOS to promote the implementation of existing UN legal instruments. *(Agreed)*

Madam Chairperson,

15. The Group notes the agenda for the 62nd session and underscores the importance of equitable access to the geo-stationary orbit by developing countries to ensure optimum utilization of satellite technology. The Group also notes the increasing congestion of satellites and accompanying proliferation of space debris and,

supports all efforts to mitigate pollution in the earth's orbit in line with differentiated responsibilities. *(Agreed)*

16. The Group also notes that some countries have introduced national laws for the exploitation of celestial bodies for economic benefit and looks forward to a better understanding of the legal obligations in space exploration to avoid disadvantaging developing countries benefiting from the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources. *(Agreed)*

17. The Group also looks forward to the Symposium on the Legal Aspects of a Dark and Quiet Sky". *(Agreed)*

18. As we expand our reach further into space and build regional capacity, the Africa Group affirms its commitment to being a responsible and peaceful user of outer space. *(Agreed)*

Thank you.