

RWANDA STATEMENT DURING THE SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE, FROM 15-26/04/2024

Agenda Item 4: General exchange of views

Thank you Chair,

Mr Chairman, distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of Rwanda, I wish to congratulate you on your election and to express our gratitude to the Director of the Office of Outer Space Affairs and to the Secretariat for the excellent preparation of this session.

Rwanda recognizes the important role of the sessions of the Legal Subcommittee as the main forum for the exchange of views on legal aspects of space activities and the fostering of international cooperation. In this regard, Rwanda joined hands with other countries by participating in different working groups of the legal subcommittee.

Mr Chairman, I am honored to share with you and the distinguished delegates the space journey in Rwanda in brief and its related legal aspects. In 2018, the leadership of Rwanda introduced the space program and thereafter in 2020, the Rwanda Space Agency was established with the mandate of promoting space technology, coordinating and regulating space activities for socio-economic development.

Since the introduction of the space program, the space technology has been operational and very productive. Through satellite data, Earth observation technology has contributed much for the improvement of socio-economic life since decision making in various domains such as agriculture, disaster management, climate change, and urbanization is based on reliable information. Through satellite communication, the space technology is improving the connectivity and hence contributes to access to services in line with the digitization which is a Government strategy to facilitate its service delivery across all sectors. That connectivity also promotes doing business and creates jobs.

Rwanda does not consider space technology for public service only. Rwanda has the will and intention of empowering the private sector in space activities. Considering that under International Space Law, governments are responsible for space activities carried out by non-governmental entities, Rwanda has the same spirit and understands that responsibility. In this regard, Rwanda commits to ensure the required authorization and continuing supervision of space activities carried out by private entities. The Rwandan Space Agency is actually preparing a Rwandan Space Law which shall open avenues in the future for private actors in Rwanda.

Rwanda thus does not only promote the space technology development but also the space legal framework. It believes that the development of the space sector requires both the technical and scientific as well as the legal arms to have a comprehensive space sector. While the space sector is still new and young in Rwanda, we found it necessary to have a vision for our space program and shape its future. In this regard, we are developing various legal instruments governing space activities as well as policy which recognizes the importance of the legal and regulatory frameworks that promote best practices and international standards. The legal and regulatory framework will address a range of issues including licensing, registration of space objects, supervision, liability and insurance, safety and environmental protection standards as well as mitigation of space debris. The planned Rwandan Space Law will summarize Rwanda's ideas for space activities.

Our objective is that the legal and regulatory frameworks have to be transparent and predictable and we believe that efficient legal and regulatory frameworks are beneficial to the operators in the space sector, government and the public which is the end user of space related services.

Rwanda is of the view that in carrying out space activities, governments and private entities should comply with principles set by UN space treaties. In this regard, the national legal and regulatory frameworks will be in harmony with International Space Law and have to ensure that space activities under Rwanda responsibility are conducted in compliance with international space legal provisions. So far, Rwanda has signed the Outer Space Treaty and prepares its ratification. Moreover, as our space program grows, Rwanda will consider to

become party to more space treaties, conventions and agreements, and Rwanda's space program will recognize the non-legally binding United Nations instruments on outer space.

Considering that the space sector is dynamic and that the exploration and use of outer space are carried out for the interests of all mankind, we should all join our efforts in determining modalities for carrying out space activities. In this regard, Rwanda believes in international cooperation and we assure you our contribution for that purpose.

To conclude, Mr Chair, Rwanda reiterates its commitment to support the work of this COPUOS Legal Subcommittee and we are looking forward to the continued cooperation.

Thank you, Chairperson.