

**Africa Group Statement for the Sixtieth Session of the Scientific and Technical
Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer
Space**

06-17 February 2023

**Delivered by His Excellency Ambassador
Mr Philbert Johnson**

**Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations Office on the
Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and Chair of the Africa Group**

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Your Excellency, Ambassador Juan Francisco Facetti, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Paraguay Chair of the 60th Session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;

Acting Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, Mr Niklas Hedman;

1. The African Group expresses its appreciation to Ambassador Juan Francisco Facetti for his able and continued leadership in steering the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC). Please be assured of the Group's support. The Africa Group also wishes to thank the Secretariat for the preparations undertaken in facilitating this meeting.

Chair,

2. At the outset, the African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Group of 77 and China.
3. The African Group welcomes Guatemala and Uzbekistan as new members of the Committee and encourages other developing countries to consider joining the Committee.
4. The African Group's participation in the sub-committee is guided by the established principles of outer space activities, namely, 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 the peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of all. Consequently, the onus is on the Committee and its Member States to promote equal, non-discriminatory access to outer space, irrespective of levels of socio-economic or scientific development.
5. The African Group acknowledges the critical role the Committee of Peaceful Uses of Outer space and its two subcommittees play in promoting international cooperation in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space and in the utilisation of space science and technology for sustainable economic and social development.
6. Space technology has practical benefits that can be leveraged as a vehicle to accelerate the 2030 SDG Agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063 in the various fields of economic development; disaster management, health, and climate change mitigation, amongst others. It also provides an ideal platform for the development of a knowledge-based economy, which is a precursor to advancing the development of the African continent. The African Group is of the opinion that it is imperative that UNCOPUOS member states, particularly developed countries, redouble their efforts to extend to all states the benefits derived from outer space activities and promote wider participation of developing countries through the provision of capacity building and technical assistance in line with their requests.

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Chair,

7. Recognizing the critical role of space in addressing developmental challenges, the African Union developed a Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024) with a focus towards developing a coordinated African space process as part of the scientific leg of the African Agenda 2063. In line with established practice, the African Group uses this opportunity to brief on the latest developments on the continent.
8. Firstly, the Group welcomes the progress made in the promotion and implementation of the African space program and commends the efforts of the African Union Commissioner of Education, Science, Technology and innovation, Professor Mohammed BELHOCINE, from Algeria.
9. The Group is pleased to report the following achievements:
 - The signing of the African Space Agency host agreement between the African Union and the Arab Republic of Egypt on January 24, 2023.
 - The signing of an MOU between the AU and the French National Center for Space Studies on space collaboration.
 - The increased participation of the African Union Commission in several international space forums, namely the 14th and 15th European Space Conferences, the 1st US-Africa space forum and the 13th African Association for Remote Sensing for Environment Conference.
 - Enhanced collaboration with the Chinese government to inspire African youth on space matters, through direct engagement with Chinese astronauts aboard the Tiangong Space Station.
 - The implementation of the second phase of the first Pan-African Earth Observation program, which focuses on improved management of water and natural resources as well as marine and coastal areas in Africa.
10. The African Group is also pleased to note the great strides made by African countries in the space field.
11. In this regard, the Group notes the historic milestone for Africa with the recent launch of EOS-SAT-1 on Space X Falcon 9 rocket.-Designed and built in Africa, it is the world's first agriculture-focused seven-satellite constellation which will provide data to support sustainable practices and biodiversity.
12. The Group continues to note with appreciation the work of the African Regional Centres for Space Science and Technology Education located in Morocco and Nigeria and calls upon the committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to continue supporting regional initiatives to promote intra-regional cooperation and foster greater African excellency and improved participation of women and youth. African countries should be afforded requisite technical assistance to establish legal and regulatory frameworks to harness space applications for national priorities.

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Chair,

13. The Group is pleased to note the adoption of an increasing number of resolutions linking space with global priorities, notably the adoption of the Space2030 Agenda, which recognizes space as a driver of Sustainable Development through the promotion of space technologies and applications and space-derived data as well Resolution 77/120 on Space and Global Health which recognizes the contribution of space science and space technology in enhancing life sciences and digital health technologies.

Chair,

14. One of the fundamental principles of the Outer Space Treaty is that the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries. To this end, the Africa Group remains concerned over the increasing number of satellite-mega constellations orbiting the earth and generating large amounts of space debris. The lack of consensus on the optimum removal of space debris has long-lasting consequences for the environment and mankind. In this regard, the Group believes that the major contributors of space debris must fulfil their historic responsibility in its mitigation and removal under an internationally agreed framework. In this regard, the Group notes with appreciation the work being carried under Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Activities and looks forward to the implementation of the work plan and mode of work.

15. Equally, the Group expresses its grave concern regarding the securitization of space and maintains that an arms race to space goes contrary to the principle of peaceful uses of outer space. In this regard, the Group calls upon all States to refrain from this practice and work towards a speedy resolution.

Chair,

16. The Group sees merit in maintaining the item on Dark and Quiet Skies on the agenda of the STSC as the continent is home to several large optical and radio telescopes. The establishment of an Expert Working Group could further advance the committee's understanding of the scope of the issue and work constructively towards addressing the problem of light pollution and the associated risks constellations pose to the security of space operations and space debris.

17. In conclusion, the Group reiterates its support for the work of the committee and looks forward to enhanced cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of all.

I thank you