



STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**61st SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED
NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF
OUTER SPACE**

AGENDA ITEM 15:

**EXAMINATION OF THE PHYSICAL NATURE AND TECHNICAL ATTRIBUTES OF
THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT AND ITS UTILIZATION AND APPLICATIONS,
INCLUDING IN THE FIELD OF SPACE COMMUNICATIONS, AS WELL AS
OTHER QUESTIONS RELATING TO DEVELOPMENTS IN SPACE
COMMUNICATIONS, TAKING PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF THE NEEDS AND
INTERESTS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE
ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION.**

TO BE DELIVERED BY MS ASANDA SANGONI

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chairperson, and Distinguished Delegates

Agenda Item N° 15 of the 2024 Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee deals with the examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit and its utilisation and applications, including in the field of space communications, as well as other questions relating to developments in space communications, taking particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries, **without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)** (*emphasis added*).

Chairperson, it is important to emphasise the critical role of the International Telecommunication Union. For this reason, the Republic of South Africa calls for increased, and continuous co-operation between UNOOSA and the ITU.

The Geostationary Orbit (GSO) is a limited resource, without access to which, satellite communication would not be possible.

The non-geostationary orbits (NGSO) comprising the low-Earth orbit (LEO) and the medium-Earth orbit (MEO) are becoming more used. Developing countries, in particular use NGSO to enter the space arena, as these orbits, particularly the LEO, is conducive to supporting low-cost satellites with short duration missions, such as cubesats.

NGSO is particularly suited to Earth observation applications, and in the near future will be utilised for direct to mobile device broadband services, which will enable the provision of such services to areas where there is no terrestrial communication infrastructure. This is an extremely important issue to developing countries.

Equitable access to the NGSO faces a different challenge to equitable access to the GSO; namely space debris!

There are currently more than 23 000 trackable objects larger than 10 cm, 670 000 Objects larger than 1 cm and an estimated 170 million objects larger than 1 mm in orbit. At orbital velocities of more than 50 000 km/hr, cm sized objects can seriously damage or disable a spacecraft in a collision.

This space debris is as a result of fragments from explosions, the intentional destruction of space objects, collisions between space objects, and abandoned rocket stages.

We call on all Copious Members to adhere to the UNOOSA Guidelines on Space Sustainability, and for the Working Group on the LTS Guidelines to consider how best to ensure the sustainability of outer space.

Finally, we call on co-operation between UNOOSA and ITU on this critical issue.

In concluding, **Chairperson**; the rational, efficient, economical and equitable use of the GSO is yet to be fully realised and consideration of these principles to the NGSO is urgently required. The Republic of South Africa lends its support for continued engagements on this agenda item.

Thank you