

LONG STATEMENT TO BE PUBLISHED ON UNOOSA WEBSITE

**Africa Group Statement for the Sixty-First Session of the Scientific and
Technical Sub-committee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space
29 January to 09 February 2024**

**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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1. The Africa Group expresses its appreciation to Ambassador Juan Francisco Facetti of Paraguay for his able leadership in steering the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) in the 59th and 60th sessions of the STSC. (Agreed ad ref)
2. It also wishes to express its support to the new Chair, Ms Ulpia Botezatu from Romania and thanks the Secretariat for the preparations undertaken in facilitating this meeting. (Agreed ad ref)
3. The Group also takes the opportunity to extend a warm welcome to Ms Aarthi Holla-Maini on her appointment as Director of the United Nations Office on Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and looks forward to working closely with her office on enhancing space cooperation and development with African countries. (Agreed ad ref).
4. The Group further congratulates Dr. Driss El Hadani on his appointment as Senior Advisor and calls for more Africans to be recruited into the Secretariat to ensure greater inclusivity and geographic representativity. (Agreed ad ref)

Chair,

5. At the outset, the Africa Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Group of 77 and China. (Agreed as ref)
6. COPUOS membership has been steadily growing and the Africa Group encourages UNOOSA to expand their outreach in encouraging more African countries to join the COPUOS as they currently comprise only 21 countries out of a membership of 102 countries. (Agreed ad ref)
7. The Africa Group acknowledges the critical role the Committee of Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two sub-committees 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, especially for developing countries. It further calls for the strengthening of legal frameworks to enhance international cooperation. (Agreed as ref).
8. The Africa 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 sub-committee and its Member States to promote equal, non-discriminatory access to outer space, irrespective of levels of socio-economic or scientific development. (Agreed as ref)

9. To this end, the Group reaffirms the importance of space science and technology in promoting sustainable development. It is increasingly evident that space technologies have 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 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, technical assistance and technology transfer, in line with their needs, priorities and upon request. (Agreed as ref)

Chair,

10. Recognising the critical role of space in addressing developmental challenges in Africa, the African Union is committed to strengthening space coordination across Africa as part of the scientific leg of the African Agenda 2063. To this end, African countries have been encouraged to integrate space activities into their national developmental agendas. The Africa Group uses this opportunity to brief on the latest developments on the continent. (Agreed as ref)

11. Firstly, the Group welcomes the progress made in the promotion and implementation of the African space programme and commends the efforts of the African Union Commissioner of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Professor Mohammed Belhocine, from Algeria. (Agreed as ref)

12. We also take this opportunity to express our support for Dr. Sherif Sedky of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Professor Rafiq Akram of the Kingdom of Morocco, as the incoming Chairs of COPUOS for 2024 and 2025 respectively. We are proud to see Africans taking up leadership positions within the international space portfolio. (Agreed as ref).

13. We would also like to acknowledge the progress made in establishing the African Space Agency. The Host Country Agreement was signed last year between the Government of Egypt and the African Union, paving the way for further strengthening African cooperation and realising the African Union goals enshrined in Agenda 2063. (Agreed as ref)

14. The Group notes with appreciation the increasing number of African countries in the international committee on Global Navigation Satellite systems, reflecting the high-quality application and technological activities of African countries in the field of satellite navigation. (Agreed as ref)

15. The Africa Group is thus further pleased to note the great strides made by African countries in the space field and encourages closer collaboration between UNOOSA and the African Union Commission. We commend the Director's initiative to draft a Space strategy based on five pillars, one of which is Space and Africa. The Group is of the view that the Strategy should be responsive to the economic,

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social, and environmental needs of the continent and facilitate Africa's role as a responsible and peaceful user of outer space. (Agreed ad Ref)

16. The Group looks forward the NewSpace Africa Conference to be held from 2-5 April 2024 in Luanda, in partnership with the African Union Commission. The conference seeks to address the transformative role of space in addressing socio-economic disparities on the continent. (New Language proposed by Angola)

17. The Group also takes the opportunity to support UNOOSA initiatives that promote the enhanced participation of women in space issues. We note the recent Space4Women meeting held in Canada; and look forward to a meeting being held in Africa in the near future. (Agreed ad ref)

Chair,

18. The Group notes with appreciation, the adoption of an increasing number of resolutions linking space with global priorities, notably the adoption of the Space2030 Agenda, and Space and Global Health, which recognise space as a driver of Sustainable Development through the promotion of space technologies applications and space-derived data in enhancing life sciences and digital health technologies. (Agreed ad ref)

Chair,

19. 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 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 out under the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Activities. (Agreed ad ref)

20. Equally, the Group expresses its grave concern regarding the securitisation of space and maintains that an arms race to space is contrary to the principle of peaceful uses of outer space. The Group thus calls upon all States to adhere to international commitments; and to work exclusively towards peaceful uses of outer space. (Agreed ad Ref)

Chair,

21. The Group supports inclusion of 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. Focused discussions 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. We look forward to constructive discussions on the

scope, duration and title of this item on the agenda of the STSC and hope that we arrive at a satisfactory outcome on this important issue. (Agreed ad ref)

22. In conclusion, the Group reaffirms its support for the Chair and the work of the committee; and looks forward to enhanced cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of all. (Agreed Ad ref)

I thank you.