



**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**

**TO BE DELIVERED BY H.E AMBASSADOR RUPULANE MOLEKANE**

**AGENDA ITEM 4 GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**

**Date: 29 January 2024**

**Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,**

Let me join others in welcoming and congratulating our new chair Ms Ulpia-Elena Botezatu from Romania for chairing this 61<sup>st</sup> Session. We are confident your able leadership will draw us closer towards achieving our objectives.

South Africa would like to extend a warm welcome to Ms Aarti Holla-Maini, on her appointment as the Director of the Office of Outer space Affairs (OOSA). We are aware that Ms Holla-Maini brings a wealth of experience to UNOOSA. We also welcome Dr Driss El-Hadani as Senior Adviser; and express our confidence that their collective experience will benefit OOSA and the broader objectives of member states. We also take the opportunity of thanking OOSA for broadening the inclusivity and representativity of Africans in the Secretariat and look forward to more Africans serving on the Secretariat. We associate ourselves with the Africa Group and G77 statements.

**Chairperson,**

South Africa regards the Scientific and Technical Sub-committee as an essential forum for the exchange of views and sharing of best practices on scientific and technical issues related to outer space. It is apparent that space-based technologies are fast becoming an accelerator for the attainment of sustainable development goals.

In this regard, South Africa remains committed to international cooperation for mutually beneficial and peaceful uses of outer space. We are of the firm belief that countries should not be discriminated from implementing their respective development strategies. Accordingly, the National Space Policy of South Africa focuses on harnessing space technologies and applications, amongst others, towards contributing to the country's economic growth and social development.

**Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,**

In ensuring that outer space remains safe and usable for all countries, South Africa reiterates its concern over space debris and encourages actors responsible for creating space debris to play an active role in clearing and cleaning activities. They should also avail their scientific and legal expertise through cooperation agreements to countries with lower levels of space development. In this regard, we affirm our support and appreciation for the work conducted under LTS Working Group.

### **Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,**

This year, South Africa celebrates the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first satellite launch. The Stellenbosch University Satellite, or SUNSAT, was the first miniaturised satellite, designed, manufactured in South Africa. Launched on 23 February 1999, this milestone marked South Africa's historical journey as the first African country to launch an African made satellite in space and solidified our journey towards becoming a responsible and peaceful user of outer space.

Moving ahead, South Africa is pleased to inform the Sub-committee that it is prioritizing its national space programme through the provision of additional funding to bolster South Africa's capabilities in space technology and innovation. The programme seeks to establish a centralised funding hub to facilitate research, development, and manufacturing of space-related technologies within the country, focusing on the objectives of infrastructure development, capacity building, industrial growth, and international collaboration.

In the coming years, it is hoped that the South African space sector will have established world class satellite assembly, integration, and testing facilities; developed a suite of sensors for Earth observation and launched a series of low Earth orbit satellites. While developing indigenous technology and capabilities, the programme will further enable the acquisition of high-resolution data, including Synthetic Aperture Radar data, to ensure availability of data to support data-driven decision-making.

## **Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates**

2023 was an eventful year for South Africa as we hosted two major space events, notably:

- (i) the National Space Conference (NSC), which advanced knowledge and information sharing about space and Earth Observation applications, operations, products and services; as well as how to use them for better decision-making and the advancement of society, economy and the protection of the environment.; and
- (ii) the 19<sup>th</sup> Group on Earth Observation (GEO) Week, which marked a significant milestone in the collaborative efforts of the international community towards advancing Earth Observation (EO) technologies. Both events had a strong youth component.

South Africa also hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Committee Meeting of the BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation (RSSC) Initiative, made up of the Heads of BRICS Space Agencies within the context of its Chairship of BRICS and looks forward to future collaborations of such nature.

In an effort to coordinate South Africa's response to climate adaptation and mitigation, South Africa also signed on to the Space Climate Observatory (SCO) Declaration. Our hope is that we will collectively harness the best use of satellite data, and digital technologies for climate action.

## **Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,**

South Africa is committed to advancing gender equality in the space sector and encouraging women and girls to pursue higher learning in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). In this regard, we affirm the objectives espoused by UNOOSA's Space4Women initiative and encourage further

efforts that empower African women. South Africa takes the opportunity to congratulate Canada on hosting the Space4Women Conference and looks forward to working towards further mainstreaming gender equality in the space domain.

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As a co-sponsor of the Conference Paper on Dark and Quiet Skies for Protection of Science and Society., South Africa supports the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the STSC and looks forward to constructive discussions on the title, scope, and duration of the agenda. It is our hope that this important issue finds its rightful place in the work of the committee.

To conclude, South Africa wishes to affirm its support for the Chair and the work of the sub-committee.

I thank you.