



## **Statement by South Africa**

The 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Agenda Item 4: General Exchange of Views

Read by Ambassador Xolisa Mabhongo

**Check against delivery**

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, along with the new members of the bureau, on your election. We have every confidence that under your experienced leadership we will make substantial progress during this session. Permit me also to record our appreciation to the outgoing officers and especially to your predecessor, Amb. Ciro Arèvalo-Yepes, for the excellent manner in which he led our work during the past two years.

We would also like to express our appreciation for the work carried out by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, in particular its Director, Dr Mazlan Othman, and the Secretariat for their dedicated work in the preparations for this session.

Mr Chairman,

First and foremost, we wish to emphasise the importance we attach to the use of outer space for peaceful purposes as a contribution to the sustainable development of humankind. The diverse interests and capabilities of member States greatly enrich COPUOS and its work. In this regard, we would like to extend our full support to Tunisia for their application to join the Committee. Tunisia has demonstrated strong capabilities in the application of space science and technology for development and would make valuable contributions to our deliberations in this Committee.

Mr Chairman,

Since the 52nd session of the Committee, South Africa has made progress on a number of fronts in space science and technology. Allow me briefly to summarise the most significant ones.

South Africa's first national satellite, SumbandilaSat, was launched as a secondary payload on a Russian Soyuz rocket from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on 17 September 2009. The satellite is being operated from the ground station in the CSIR Satellite applications Centre.

In order to support the bid for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), South Africa is building the MeerKAT radio telescope array in the Northern Cape Province. A major milestone was achieved in April 2010, when the first four 12-metre diameter telescopes in the MeerKAT Precursor Array (also known as KAT-7) were linked together as an integrated system to produce the MeerKAT's first interferometric image of an astronomical object. The full 80-dish MeerKAT array is expected to be completed by late 2013 or early 2014.

Mr Chairman,

No satellite or telescope facility is of value unless there are people to utilise it purposefully. In this regard South Africa has launched a number of human capital development initiatives in the space arena. The SKA Human Capital Development programme is one example. As of January 2010, 216 students have been through the programme. Over 40 of these students are from other African countries. Another human capital development is the F'SATI programme, aimed building capacity in both academia and industry. This programme is offered by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in collaboration with the Ecole Supérieure d'Ingénieurs en Electrotechnique et Electronique in France. Two industry seminars were offered under this programme in March and May 2010 for the benefit of industry, government and academia.

South Africa participated in the Third African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable development, held in Algiers, in December 2009. On the occasion of that conference, Algeria, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa developed a cooperation agreement on the African Resource Management satellite constellation, bringing this intra-African project one step closer to realisation. We congratulate Algeria on hosting this very successful and productive third ALC meeting and look forward to the fourth meeting in the series in Kenya in September 2011. South Africa regards the ALC as an important forum to promote inter-regional cooperation.

From 17-19 May 2010, South Africa hosted the GEO Work Plan Symposium in Pretoria. The main objectives of the Symposium were: to Foster the Work Plan Implementation across and within GEOSS areas; to Develop practical recommendations for the 2011 Work Plan Update; to Identify achievements that could be presented at Beijing Ministerial Summit Exhibition; and to Initiate reflections and discussions in preparation of the GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan.

South Africa will host the African Aerospace and Defence show in Cape Town from 21-25 September 2010. This is a premier event on the international aerospace calendar and is the largest exhibition of its kind in Africa.

South Africa looks forward to hosting the 62nd International Astronautical Congress (IAC) that will be held in Cape Town from 3-7 October 2011. This will be the first time that this

Congress is held on the African continent. We are working with our African partners and the international space community to ensure that the hosting of this Congress provides maximum benefit for the continent.

Mr Chairman,

South Africa views international, regional and inter-regional cooperation as one of the strongest mechanisms for maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. As more and more States enter the space arena, it is natural to reflect on the role of COPUOS in such an evolving space landscape. In this regard, we believe that the working paper A/AC.105/L.278 "Towards a United Nations Space Policy," developed by your predecessor, Amb. Ciro Arévalo-Yepes, contains many valuable ideas that merit further examination and discussion. We look forward to the exchange of views on this paper under the appropriate agenda item.

Mr Chairman,

Space technology plays a critical role in supporting sustainable development. South Africa therefore believes that the sustainability of space activities is a matter of concern to all nations, whether spacefaring or not. In this regard we look forward to working with member States of the Committee to develop the Terms of Reference, Method of Work and Working Plan of the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, established at the last session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

Mr Chairman,

A number of delegations have suggested that consideration be given to improving the efficiency with which we organize our work in the Committee and its Subcommittees. We recall that at its 52<sup>nd</sup> session the Committee requested the Group of 15, or G-15, to consider how to rationalize and optimize the use of time in COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies. We look forward to further discussion on this matter under agenda item 16, "Other matters".

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, let me reiterate that you will have our delegation's full cooperation to ensure a successful and productive outcome of this session.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.