

STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA
TO
THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE
PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
TO BE DELIVERED BY
AMBASSADOR MOLEKANE

AGENDA ITEM 5: GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

03 JUNE 2022

My delegation expresses our congratulations on your election as the Chair of this committee as well as our appreciation for the work carried out by the Secretariat in preparation for this session.

At the onset, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the African Group and the Group of 77 and China respectively.

Mr Chair

South Africa welcomes the expanding membership of COPUOS. This highlights its crucial role in strengthening the international legal regime governing outer space and expanding international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

South Africa reiterates its commitment to the principles established in the Outer Space Treaty to contribute to the sustainable and peaceful use of outer space for the benefit and in the interests of all countries. The application of relevant space technologies for peaceful purposes will make a tangible contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr Chair

The process to reform our domestic space legislation is close to finalisation. The proposed amendments takes into consideration substantive issues that are relevant to the emerging global space dispensation, including pro-activeness in application of the Registration and the Liability Conventions, guidelines being finalised by this Committee, such as those on, Space Debris Mitigation, the application of international law to small satellite activities and the review of international mechanisms for cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space.

We also welcome the establishment of the new working group of legal mechanisms for space resources under the Legal sub-Committee and commends COPUOS for tackling such pertinent yet complex matters due to rapidly evolving technological and commercial developments.

Mr Chair

South Africa is also pleased to note progress made towards the implementation of a set of voluntary, guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. We further welcome the achievement of the working group in endorsing the terms of reference, methods of work and accompanying work plan.

Mr Chair

South Africa organised the Africa Round of the Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Competition, which was held virtually from the 12 to 13 May 2022 with 8 teams from four countries, namely Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa. We congratulate the winning team, Zimbabwe, and wish them well in the World Finals in Paris. The rapid increase in the number of teams and participation from Universities across Africa is testament to the interest that is being generated each year by this exciting Competition and will result in an expansive pool of law graduates specialising in Space law thus benefiting Africa.

Mr Chair

International cooperation remain the cornerstone of South Africa's space program and is grounded in our National Space Policy. In this regard, South Africa would like to underscore the adoption of the African Space Policy and Strategy taken at the 26th ordinary session of the African Union. This policy and strategy will be one of the flagship programmes of the AU Agenda 2063, highlighting the central role space science and technology play in Africa's socio-economic development. Member states have been requested to mobilize domestic resources for its implementation. South Africa looks forward to working with all our partners to operationalise this objective.

Chair

Furthermore, The South African National Space Agency (SANSA), the implementing arm for South Africa's National Space Program, is pursuing our commitment to

enhance decision-making processes on the Continent through the use of space technology, such as resuscitating the African Resource Management Constellation (ARMC), a cooperative project between Algeria, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa to develop and operate a constellation of Earth observation satellites.

Mr Chair

South Africa reiterates the importance of the Space 2030 Agenda in supporting sustainable economic growth and improving quality of life for all. It outlines an inclusive and long-term strategy aimed at utilizing space tools to achieve the global sustainable development initiatives of the UN.

Accordingly, South Africa recognises the exemplary engagement between the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the International Astronomical Union (IAU), and other stakeholders in preparing a conference on Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society. The discussion on technical issues, legal instruments and political measures has a direct impact on South Africa.

The trade-offs between the protection of the dark and quiet skies, and the needs of orbital operators should address challenges relating to the interference from: (a) artificial light at night; (b) the large number of low Earth orbit satellite; and (c) radio-wavelength emissions. Preserving the pristine environment for astronomy is very important to South Africa as it is home to the Southern African Large Telescope and the MeerKAT radio telescope.

To conclude, the South African delegation wishes you and the Committee a productive session.

Thank You.