Madam President,

1. Let me from the outset join other delegations in thanking you for convening this meeting to mark the first ever Special Day on Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 73/127.

2. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Non-Aligned Movement.

3. The adoption of this resolution designated 24 April as an annual Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, which is a reaffirmation of the UN Charter and its principles in resolving disputes among countries through peaceful means.
4. The observance of this Day complements the adoption of the Political Declaration at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit on 24 September 2018 in this august General Assembly, where we as UN Member States committed to redouble our efforts to building a just, peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and fair world, and to revive the values for which Nelson Mandela stood by. We also committed ourselves to demonstrating understanding and reconciliation among nations and people of our world. We recognised that the world has changed significantly since the founding of the United Nations, and acknowledged that global peace eludes us to this day. Therefore, we have a responsibility to finding sustainable solutions to bring lasting peace, and to addressing threats to global peace and security, including challenges to the primacy of multilateralism. At the apex of multilateralism is the Un system, the Global Centre of Power and inter-state relations.

5. Since 1994, South Africa’s foreign policy has been inspired by its history and guided by its ethos and principles, foremost amongst which is the desire for a just, humane and equitable world. In the conduct of our international relations, we attach the utmost importance to the promotion of human rights, democracy, justice and the rule of international law. These principles necessarily place multilateral institutions, specifically the United Nations, at the centre of our foreign policy activities. And that’s part of our duty is to protect and defend multilateralism.

6. Multilateral system can also assist all of us to manage complex and new issues, new transnational threats like terrorism, climate change, pandemic disease and food insecurity, disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, migration, protectionism, inequality, poverty and unemployment and other challenges, in which common problems can no longer be solved without the collective efforts of all members of the international system acting together through multilateral institutions.

7. The centrality of the United Nations to South Africa’s international relations strategy is thus based on a strong belief in a rules-based international system of global governance.
8. As we did 74 years ago when we became the founding member of the UN, today as we stand on the verge of 75 years anniversary of the UN, we still believe that the multilateral system should be an indivisible construct based on common and shared values. It should set norms and standards that should find universal application, without exception. The normative framework flowing from the multilateral system should be at the service of humanity and not the parochial interests of the few.

9. My delegation, therefore believes that the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement to recognize this Day on an annual basis acknowledges the use of multilateral decision-making and diplomacy as the right tool in achieving peaceful resolution of conflicts among nations. This is also in line with Chapter VI of the UN Charter which promotes the pacific settlements of conflicts. This non-aggressive and pacifist approach reinforces the three pillars of the UN, namely, sustainable development, peace and security and human rights. These pillars are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and support each other and should be treated on equal footing.

Madam President,

10. My delegation believes if conflicts are not settled through multilateral diplomacy, such situations will lead to wars or threats of wars, ultimately leading to the suffering and disenfranchisement of millions of people. Women and children are amongst the most affected during these conflicts and the UN through the charter can bring nations together to avoid such catastrophes, which are man-made. The global geopolitical challenges that humanity is facing are complex and multifaceted. No single country, no matter how powerful and wealthy, can seek to assume for itself the global unilateral monopoly on seeking solutions to all the world's problems. Most of the regional conflicts require a multilateral approach and high-level diplomacy.

Madam President,

11. South Africa as a founding member of the United Nations always stands for the respect of the principles of the UN Charter, which includes recognizing the rule of law, territorial integrity and sovereignty of UN member States.
Madam President,

12. In conclusion, we reaffirm our support for multilateralism and diplomacy as the best way for states to resolve conflicts and respect for international institutions and agreements as a guiding principle in relations between Member States. Multilateralism is particularly important today because of increased global and regional economic interdependence, the emergence of new major systemic changes affecting the global distribution of power, and the enhance role of global civil society. The best safeguard for our security and prosperity is to consolidate rather than erode the rule of law, and embed the principles of cooperation over conflict and collaboration over confrontation. The challenge therefore is to expedite efforts to transform global politics from a power-based hierarchical construct to a rules-based system of international society.

As we reform the UN system to make it fit for purpose in times, we should also speed up the reform of the UNSC to make more representative and also include Africa in its permanent category.

I thank you