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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE MEETING OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION  
COMMITTEE ON AGENDA ITEM 49: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION  
IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK  
17 OCTOBER 2014

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**Mr Chairman,**

My delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of this Committee for the 69th Session of the General Assembly. We also would like to express our gratitude to the former Chairman, Mr Yasushi Horikawa for his able leadership of our deliberations during the past two years. We look forward to our constructive engagement with the Committee during this session.

We further would like to congratulate Ms Simonetta Di Pippo on her appointment as Director of the UN Office of Outer Space Affairs. With her extensive experience and skills, we are confident that the Office will continue to build on the solid foundation laid by her predecessor, Dr Mazlan Othman.

**Mr Chairman,**

The increase of space debris is a matter of concern for my delegation due to the risk that it poses to space systems, and a consequent risk of disruption of the many space-based services on which we all rely. In this regard, we are pleased to note the progress of the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, chaired by South Africa. The expert group has proposed a series of guidelines that will greatly support the objective of the Working Group to produce a set of voluntary guidelines that may be applied by all space actors to enhance the safety of outer space activities and preserve the space environment for future generations. We call on all Member States to continue supporting the Working Group.

**Mr Chairman,**

South Africa is committed to being a responsible user outer space and joins the call for all nations to work together to ensure that we preserve the Earth's outer space environment for future generations. This should be done in full consideration of General Assembly resolution number 51, 51/122 "Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries", and by not placing additional burdens and barriers to new entrants into the space arena. All States should have access to space for peaceful purposes on an equitable basis, and with due regard for the space activities of other States.

To this end, my government will endeavor to ensure that all national public and private sector space activities are conducted in accordance with appropriate international best practices and relevant international treaties.

In the domain of space law, we believe that the work of the Legal Subcommittee is vital to develop a shared understanding of the legal implications of the rapid pace of development in the space arena. Our commitment to fostering respect for international norms of space law is demonstrated by the decision to review our existing domestic space legal and regulatory framework in light of developments in the South African space arena and globally. A review of the South African Space Affairs Act is currently in progress, specifically taking into account the need to re-evaluate and to define the regulatory and supervisory roles of government, while at the same time creating an enabling environment for the growing commercial space sector.

In this regard, we will be greatly assisted by the set of recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space recently developed by the Legal Subcommittee. The review of the Act will also be influenced by the important work being undertaken in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the work of the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, as the outcomes of that process, though not legally binding, may nevertheless have legal consequences.

**Mr Chairman,**

South Africa is committed to utilising outer space for peaceful purposes and to the benefit of all humankind. We firmly believe that international cooperation is one of the best ways of preserving outer space for peaceful purposes and that intra-regional cooperation will play an important role in developing the space arena. My Government, together with all our African partners, is committed to ensure that the benefits of space technology are extended to the rest of the African continent, and to this end we concluded the development of an African Space Policy and Strategy, which is currently awaiting approval by African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology before the end of this year.

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

I thank you.