

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR XOLISA MABHONGO AT THE COMMEMORATIVE SEGMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (UNCOPUOS), 1 JUNE 2011**

Chairperson,

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS). Throughout this period UNCOPUOS has had notable achievements and played a practical role in promoting the peaceful uses of outer space. The Committee has assisted with the development of international space law and the promotion of international cooperation on space matters.

Today we also celebrate 50 years since the Russian cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, made history when he became the first person to be lifted into space. His flight inspired many generations and laid the basis for much further development of space exploration.

We meet today as representatives of governments, international organisations, and private sector to celebrate these tremendous developments in space use and exploration. Our meeting here today bears testimony to the benefits of enhanced international cooperation in space use and exploration.

Chairperson,

We take cognisance of the important role that space technology can play in socio- economic development. Space technology contributes to the upliftment of the human conditions through its use in areas such as water management, environment conservation, land use and management, the development of new medicines as well better and improved communications. South Africa therefore places great importance to the development of space technology.

We believe that international and regional cooperation is the mechanism that will make countries benefit even more from the peaceful use of outer space. In this regard, South Africa is pleased to

work together with Algeria, Nigeria and Kenya in the intra-African initiative called the African Resource Management Constellation. The ARMC aims to develop a network of satellites to make space technology more accessible to African end-users in areas such as, environmental monitoring, land use, water management and public health which ultimately ensures food security.

Chairperson,

South Africa wishes to emphasise the importance of the long-term sustainability of the human use outer space. We are convinced that the current generation has a responsibility to ensure that future generations also reap benefits from the peaceful uses of outer space. Furthermore the principle of equity in the exploitation of outer space should ensure that all countries, big and small, benefit from the peaceful use of outer space.

Chairperson,

In our national capacity, South Africa has been actively involved in space science and technology projects for many years. South Africa has a rich heritage of involvement since 1685. In 1820 a permanent observatory was established outside Cape Town, practising Astronomy since then culminating into the construction of the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) in Sutherland.

Our country has been an active participant in the exploration of space since the dawn of the Space Age; wherein from the 1950's to the 1970's satellites were tracked to determine the effects of upper atmosphere on their orbits. Lunar and interplanetary orbits were supported by the tracking station at Hartebeesthoek. The station received images of the planet Mars taken by the Mariner IV spacecraft; the first images of Mars and another planet to be received on Earth.

Amongst other achievements - in 1999 we launched our first satellite called SunSat as an experiment for remote sensing applications. South Africa's second satellite; Sumbandilsat was launched on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2009 in Kazakhstan, on a Soyuz II-1B rocket

Chairperson,

It is also fitting that in the year of this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of human space flight and the establishment of COPUOS, South Africa will host the 62<sup>nd</sup> International Astronautical Congress (IAC) in Cape Town in October. This is the first time that the IAC will be held on African soil. We look forward to welcoming you to South Africa to participate in this historic event.

Thank you.

**ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

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