Statement by South Africa

The 50th session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (11 – 22 February 2013)

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Delivered by Ambassador Xolisa Mabhongo

15 February 2013

Agenda Item 3: General Exchange of Views

Mr Chair,

It is with great pleasure that the South African delegation participates in this 50th session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-committee of COPUOS.

Allow me to begin by expressing our gratitude to you for presiding over this session and we are confident that progress will be made on the various agenda items and assure you of our full support.

My delegation also wish 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.

I would like to express our support for the candidature of Ghana in this Committee and its application for full membership.

Mr Chair,

South Africa places great importance to the development of space technology. This is informed by the important role space technology can play in the socio-economic development.

In this regard, my delegation notes with concern the increasing number of natural disasters and their trend in frequency. The UN-SPIDER programme therefore becomes critical in particular for developing countries in reducing the impact of disasters which tend to have negative impact in sustainable development. In this regard, we commend the technical advisory missions that were carried out by the Office in particular in Mozambique and the recommendations provided.

South Africa recognizes the monitoring of space weather as being of great importance, not only from technological but also from industrial and developmental point of view. To contribute in this global endeavor, South Africa together with India and Brazil are collaborating on developing a microsatellite known as 'IBSA' in the areas of space weather, climate and earth observations.

The increase of space debris is also a matter of concern for my delegation due to its risk of endangering future exploration and sustainable

environment for the use of outer space. South Africa in its regulatory practises is implementing the UN space debris mitigation guidelines.

During Rio+20, countries renewed their commitment to sustainable development which include, collective efforts to improve the lives of all people as well as to ensure that we leave a healthy planet for future generations. In this regard, my delegation note with appreciation the discussions on the review of the status of the implementation of UNISPACE III recommendations. My delegation supports the proposal that the Working Group of the Whole should study the outcome of Rio+20 with a view to discuss ways and means of assisting the Subcommittee and the Committee in future activities. It therefore should not continue reviewing the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. In our view this would align the work of this Committee with the UN Resolution 66/288, "The future we want" and resolution 67/113, which recognises the important role that space science and technology play in promoting sustainable development.

South Africa will continue to support the use of space technology for human development. In this regard, we note with satisfaction progress with regard to the work of the Working Group on Long Term Sustainability on Outer Space under the chairmanship of our Mr Peter Martinez.

Mr Chair,

I'm pleased to report in this meeting progress in space related activities in my country that we have achieved since the last Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee meeting in February last year.

We value the importance of international cooperation and collaboration for the development of space science and technology.

In this regard, South Africa is a co-chair and founding member of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), which is charged to implement the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). In addition South Africa Co-Chairs the Post 2015 and Data Sharing Working Groups, and also participate in the GEO Ministerial Summit Working Group in Geneva. These WG are critical for free and open data exchange between the industrialized and developing world for the advancement of Earth Observation for sustainable development.

To this end, South Africa is making progress in the implementation of the Global Monitoring of Environment and Security (GMES) and Africa initiative known as Bridging Actions for GMES and Africa (BRAGMA) project. The project is important as it addresses issues relating to long term management of

- natural resources,
- marine and coastal awareness,
- water resources management,

as well as impact of climate variability change, natural disasters, food security and rural development.

South Africa and the European Union agreed to cooperate on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) applications and services. In this regard, a letter of intent was signed between the EU and South Africa in March 2012. There is work in progress on the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) extension. A series of discussions at the SA-EU Space Dialogue are held yearly in Pretoria and Brussels.

At a regional level, the African Union Commission endorsed the establishment of the Working Group (WG) on Space Science. In its first meeting held in Pretoria on 13 – 14 December 2012, South Africa was appointed to be the Chair of the Working Group. The Working Group is tasked to develop a draft African Space Policy and Strategy. It is expected that the WG would complete these drafts by mid 2014 and present the work for consideration and adoption by the African Ministerial Committee on Science and Technology (AMCOST VI).

South Africa, in consultation with SADC, is exploring the feasibility of hosting the space component of the Pan African University (PAU). We believe this is a great initiative given the work in progress on Africa Space Policy and Strategy as well as the African Resource Management Constellation. The PAU concept involves the promotion, networking and development of programmes and research centres within some existing excellent universities in the five geographic sub-regions of the continent.

South African National Space Agency (SANSA) has committed to participate in Monitoring of the Environment and Security in Africa (MESA-SADC-THEMA) which is a follow-on project of the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD-SADC-THEMA)

project which started in 2010. The Thematic Action focus for MESA-SADC-THEMA is agricultural and environmental resource management. In this regard, South Africa hosted a workshop on Earth Observation for Meteorological Applications in 2012. Through this workshop South Africa succeeded in mobilizing all Meteorological Actors in the region.

Mr Chair,

In response to GEO, at a national level, South Africa is pleased to report that the National Earth Observation and Space Secretariat – NEOSS was established in 2012. NEOSS aims to mobilise the South African Earth observation communities to advocate the use of Earth observation for societal benefits. NEOSS will also coordinate and facilitate South African Earth Observation community contributions to GEOSS and AfriGEOSS and other international initiatives and activities. Through this initiative, a number of practices in the areas of agriculture, water, natural resources, air quality and land-cover have been activated to address the various societal benefit areas.

South Africa is making efforts to address the shortage of expertise in space science and technology. An audit was done to assess human capital development programme and research activities in space applications and geo-informatics. In implementing the recommendations of the audit, South Africa would be looking at international collaboration in human capital development and technology transfer.

Mr Chair,

As we develop our space activities, South Africa remains committed in utilising space for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of human kind.

Thank you, Mr Chair.