



STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

AGENDA 9

**LEGAL MECHANISMS RELATING TO LEGAL ASPECTS ON UN GUIDELINES ON
SPACE DEBRIS MITIGATION AND REMEDIATION MEASURES**

**LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER
SPACE: 63rd SESSION**

15 – 26 APRIL 2024

Check Against Delivery

Word count 520

Thank you, Chairperson,

The deliberate destruction of space objects, for whatever reason, and the resultant proliferation of space debris, particularly in the low-Earth orbits, jeopardises the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. In order to ensure that outer space remains safe and usable for all countries, South Africa reiterates its concern over space debris; and encourages actors responsible for creating space debris, to play an active role in clearing and cleaning activities. They should also share their scientific and legal expertise, through cooperation agreements, with countries with lower levels of space capabilities to ensure the safety and usability of outerspace for everyone.

South Africa is actively involved with space debris monitoring efforts by hosting international agencies' equipment. Since March 2017, the South African National Space Agency (SANSA), has, together with the German Space Agency (DLR), hosted a sub-1m optical telescope, at the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) site in Sutherland. This telescope plays an important role in tracking and monitoring space debris, thus contributing to global efforts of maintaining space safety and sustainability. South Africa is also considering building indigenous capability for space debris tracking

Chairperson,

The South African Council for Space Affairs (SACSA) is mandated to ensure that South Africa adheres to the International Space Treaties and Conventions, including the Liability Convention. Developing operational space debris tracking capability would enable South Africa to fulfil its obligations under these treaties more effectively.

This underscores the importance of having appropriate instruments and frameworks in place to effectively manage space debris. Stellenbosch University, through its involvement in various projects such as DeOrbitSail, RemoveDebris, and The Chaser, has demonstrated a commitment to developing alternative methods for space debris mitigation. These projects, although they come with added financial implications, represent innovative approaches to tackling the issue of space debris.

Chairperson,

South Africa strongly believes that an inter-disciplinary and mutually supportive effort is needed to achieve long-term sustainability of outer space activities. South Africa strongly

advocates voluntary responsible behaviour, premised on the understanding that outer space should remain an operationally stable and safe environment that is maintained for peaceful purposes and open for exploration, use and international cooperation by current and future generations in a manner that is respectful of international norms and principles.

South Africa is committed to the development of both regulations and an implementation plan for space debris tracking capability, that will include elements of human capital development; technology and infrastructure development; as well as international partnerships and operationalisation to lay the groundwork for an effective space debris management.

I thank you.