

**STATEMENT
BY**

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**AT THE 43RD SESSION OF THE
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE
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OUTER SPACE**

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Chairperson,

My delegation wishes to express its pleasure to see you presiding over this forty-third session of the COPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

Chairperson,

South Africa continues to contribute to the development and exploitation of space technology as it has done since the dawn of the space age in the late 1950's. Our government continues to recognize our nation's reliance on space technology for our day-to-day needs as well as the huge development potential that capability in space offers. Indeed, South Africa has identified space as an essential tool with which to tackle our national priorities of meeting basic needs and improving resource management, as well as retaining and improving our scientific and technological expertise. The space arena enjoys a high level of interest and ever increasing commitment by our government towards the achievement of these goals. South Africa is committed to being a responsible user of space and recognizes the common interest of all mankind in the progress of the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Chairperson,

In October 2005 Mr Mosibudi Mangena, South Africa's Minister of Science & Technology, announced a 3-year integrated capacity building and satellite development project, and emphasized his Department's view of this as the beginning of a long-term space programme. To this end, this project will result in an increase in satellite engineering capacity and will contribute to future micro-satellite technology developments. The project is the initiative of the Department of Science and Technology and is managed by the Stellenbosch University. The satellite was developed by SunSpace & Information Systems (PTY) Ltd, with the CSIR's Satellite Application Centre (SAC) positioned to provide mission control services such as telemetry and tracking. The satellite, currently designated ZA 002, will assist in identifying areas that will benefit from increased capability in space, as well as areas that may need further encouragement in order to achieve the relevant objectives of NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals.

Alongside this technology development and capacity building project, the South African government has recently undertaken to formulate a comprehensive national space policy and establish a space agency. These will provide the regulatory and implementation framework respectively for our endeavours in space.

Discussions are ongoing with Algeria, Kenya and Nigeria, towards a possible launch and operation of a low-Earth-orbiting satellite constellation which will provide data to address the most crucial of Africa's development objectives: food security, infrastructure development, and the improved management of land usage, water resources, and disasters.

Chairperson,

Several South African national facilities contributed meaningfully to the achievements in space science and technology of the past year. In November 2005 the Southern African Large Telescope (“SALT”) was inaugurated in the company of many international visitors from our continent and beyond. SALT’s international partners include institutions in Germany, New Zealand, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States. South Africa views SALT as an African Facility, and is seeking mechanisms by which scientists from African countries can access SALT. In this regard, in 2005 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the South African Astronomical Observatory and the Centre for Basic Space Science in Nigeria to allow Nigerian scientists to access the South African portion of time on SALT. We are working to enable similar arrangements with other interested African countries.

Time does not permit me to discuss any of the innovative features of the design of SALT that brought such a telescope within reach of South Africa. However, I am pleased to inform you that a technical presentation on SALT will be offered to this sub-Committee on the 22nd of February.

Chairperson,

In 2005, South Africa continued to support international space exploration activities from our ground stations. NASA’s Deep Impact mission in July was supported with tracking and telemetry data from the SA Satellite Applications Centre and the mobile facility of Denel OTB. Their data confirmed the successful second and third stage separation of the spacecraft. Last year the Satellite Applications Centre celebrated 40 years of satellite tracking experience, our geographical position contributing valuably to many international missions over the years.

Chairperson,

South Africa’s responsibility as one of the co-chairs of the Group on Earth Observations has raised the profile of satellite remote sensing and other earth observation methods in our country. The work of the Meraka Institute on the Sensor Web Enablement project has led to the development of a multi-agent framework for applications, and prototype applications for disaster early warnings are in progress. Projects such as these will form a strong basis for the newly approved South African Earth Observation Strategy initiative (“SAEOS”), which will be our national contribution to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems. The Institute for Satellite and Software Applications is a central player in the data handling and applications development for SAWOS. This strategy has established the acquisition of remote sensing data as of national importance, and will enable us to contribute positively to the aims of this international programme and to achieve one of its strategic objectives, namely contributing to a better world.

South Africa recognizes the inspirational potential of space to encourage interest and excellence in the fields of science, mathematics and engineering, enabling innovation and achievement in industrial and technological endeavours. Firm government commitment to national programmes has resulted in an increased awareness of space as a developmental and education tool and source of inspiration. This is an attitude reflected in the work of organizations such as the Shuttleworth Foundation who are developing teaching materials that use space to demonstrate the principles of physics to high school learners. South Africa's spirit of international cooperation and collaboration in space is exemplified by the alignment of the National Youth Development Trust to the International Space School Foundation. Learners and educators were introduced to the excitement of space during an extended national World Space Week programme, which included seminars on space policy and space science given by invited international experts from ESA, NASA and the BNSC. We are grateful to these agencies for supporting our development programmes in this manner.

Chairperson,

With regard to Agenda item 13 on the International Heliophysical Year 2007, my delegation wishes to inform this sub-Committee that South Africa is planning to host a regional workshop on African participation in the International Heliophysical Year and International Polar Year in Cape Town in June 2006. The intention of the workshop is twofold. Firstly it will explore potential opportunities for collaborative engagement in the IHY and IPY, and secondly it will chart a way forward in terms of regional participation in the activities of the International Heliophysical Year and the International Polar Year. This workshop is being planned by the National Research Foundation and the Department of Science and Technology of South Africa, in conjunction with the recently opened ICSU Regional Office for Africa and with partners in Germany. We invite other interested African countries to join us in planning this important regional event.

In conclusion, Chairperson, South Africa strongly supports the use of space science and technology for sustainable development, and we look forward to enhancing our contribution in the space arena for the benefit of our local, regional and global community.