

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

BY

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AT

THE THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE:
OUTER SPACE (DISARMAMENT ASPECTS)

77TH UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

The African Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the Representative of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and wishes to make the following remarks.

2. The outer space and other celestial bodies must continue to be regarded and safeguarded as the common heritage of humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for peaceful purposes for the benefit and interest of all Member States, irrespective of their social, economic or scientific development in the spirit of cooperation.

3. The African Group stresses the importance of the prevention of an arms race in outer space through a legally binding instrument that would complement the international legal framework.

4. The Group welcomed General Assembly resolutions 76/23 on "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space" and 76/55 on "No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space", both of which reaffirm the importance and urgency of the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space and the willingness of all States to contribute to reaching this common goals, as well as resolution 73/72 on "Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities", which reaffirms that "preventing an arms race in outer space is in the interest of maintaining international peace and security".

5. In this context, the Group stressed the urgent need for our planet, including outer space, to be free of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction, and indeed all other kinds of weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humanity.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The African Group emphasizes the paramount importance of strict compliance with existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space, including bilateral agreements, and with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space. The Group also calls for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

7. The Group reemphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the CD on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) in all its aspects.

8. The African Group recalls the adoption of the African Space Policy and Strategy in 2016 and regards it as an important policy framework towards the realization of an African Outer Space Programme within the framework of Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

9. The Group also recalls the establishment of the African Outer Space Agency and, reiterates that the immense potential of space technology and applications should be equally beneficial to all Member States. On this note, the African Group calls on the United Nations to promote equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space for all nations.

Mr. Chairman,

10. The Group also stresses the importance of the international legal framework that allows for the equal exploration of the outer space based on the principles of non-appropriation and peaceful uses of outer space in conformity with the five United Nations Treaties governing space activities, in particular, the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the activities of States

in the exploration and the use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies.

11. The African Group maintains that the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities continue to represent an important contribution towards maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

12. The intentional creation of space debris arising from the deliberate destruction of space systems represents a major concern for the African Group due to its consequences on the future of exploration and use of outer space. Therefore, the mitigation of space debris and the prohibition of their intentional creation through the deliberate destruction of space systems should be among the priorities of the work of the United Nations. Challenges related to space activities, in particular, space debris, should be addressed in such a way that it will not jeopardize the development of the peaceful space capabilities of developing countries.

13. Thank you.