Thank you Chairperson,

South Africa has already in various multilateral fora expressed its concern about developments that could prompt a new arms race on earth and in outer space. We have also cautioned against any action that could lead to the weaponisation of outer space.

Space is a driver for economic growth and innovations for the benefit of all mankind. Space activities and technologies contribute to tackling global challenges such as climate change, disaster management, food security, and the protection of the environment. Space science and technology will also play an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Given the exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes and outer space playing an ever increasing role in the development of humankind, the international community has a responsibility to prevent outer space from turning into a new area of weapons placement.

Chairperson,

South Africa believes that the best way to promote order, safety, security and the sustainability of outer space activities and to preserve outer space as a domain for peaceful activities is through international cooperation and dialogue, in which all interested States can participate on an equal basis.

Key to such efforts is the extent to which all States are able to gain access to, and benefit from, outer space, regardless of their level of scientific, technical and economic development. A key component of our efforts to sustain outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes, is the need to establish measures to ensure that space does not become the next arena for conflict and, consequently, that an arms race in outer space does not become a reality.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains supportive of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally-binding instrument that would effectively prevent an arms race in outer space. Whilst recognising the many contributions that have been made to the debate, we particularly appreciate the efforts of China and the Russian Federation, who submitted a concrete proposal for a possible draft Treaty on the Prevention of
the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space (PPWT). However, under the present circumstances it appears highly unlikely that an agreement could be reached at the CD in the near future. It is therefore important that other avenues for negotiations should also be explored, such as the UN General Assembly.

Chairperson,

Whilst South Africa welcomes the general pledge by States not to allow space to become the next theatre of war and conflict, we believe that a Treaty on PAROS would complement and reaffirm the importance of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which aims to preserve space for peaceful uses by prohibiting the use of space weapons and the development of space-weapon technology.

South Africa is therefore pleased to have participated in the first session of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the UN Secretary-General to "consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space".

We will continue to support the work of the GGE and to articulate our position in accordance with the 2016 African Space Policy and Strategy, which raises awareness of the central role of space science and technology in socio-economic development. We believe that the benefits of outer space should be accessible to all and not confined to only those countries with a space programme.

I thank you, Chairperson.