STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

DURING THE

74TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE:
OUTER SPACE CLUSTER

29TH OCTOBER 2019
NEW YORK
Mr. Chairman,

The African Group aligns itself with the Statement of the Non-Aligned Movement delivered by Indonesia and wish to make the following remarks on the outer space cluster.

Mr. Chairman,

The present-day role of space technology has become pervasive. Never before has information, communication, banking, navigation, and even political and strategic decision-making been so dependent on space-based technologies. It is for this reason that the outer space and other celestial bodies must continue to be regarded as the common heritage of humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for the benefit and interest of all, and safeguarded against armed conflicts.

The African Group emphasises the need for a comprehensive and legally binding treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including a prohibition on the placement of weapons in outer space as well as on armed attacks against outer space objects.

The Group recalls the adoption of the African Space Policy and Strategy in 2016, and the establishment of the African Outer Space Agency in 2019 and regards these steps as an important development towards the realization of an African Outer Space Programme within the framework of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The Group therefore, reiterates that the immense potential of space technology and applications should be equally beneficial to all Member States regardless of their level of socio-economic or scientific development, and calls on the United Nations to promote equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space for all nations.
The Group 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.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group recalls the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts, pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/250, with the mandate to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and welcomes the substantive and comprehensive deliberations conducted by the GGE.

In reaffirming the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the Group expresses concern for the many years of impasse, which has prevented the CD from fulfilling its mandate as the world’s single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The Group therefore, calls on the CD to, without further delay, resume substantive work, taking into account the security interests of all States.

In conclusion, the African States remain committed towards peaceful uses of outer space for the development of our planet.

I thank you for your attention.