STATEMENT
DELIVERED BY MARTIN NGUNDZE, FIRST SECRETARY: POLITICAL AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING DEBATE ON OUTER SPACE (DISARMAMENT ASPECTS) OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 74th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA74), TUESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2019

Chairperson,

The benefits of outer space and its exploration for peaceful purposes cover everything from agriculture to zoology. Space-based systems deliver information and services that protect lives and the environment, enhance prosperity and security, and stimulate scientific, industrial and economic development.

For my delegation, co-operation with Member States in respect of mutually beneficial and peaceful uses of outer space - with a focus on extending these benefits of space technology to developing countries - will go a long way in the achievement of the African Space Policy and Strategy adopted by the African Union in 2016, to ensure space science and technology serve as a key driver for inclusive and sustainable development in Africa.

Chairperson,

In view of the vast benefits provided by the outer space environment, it is our obligation as responsible space stakeholders to ensure that outer space and other celestial bodies
remain an area for exclusively peaceful purposes. It is of the utmost importance for my
delegation that space does not become yet another frontier for war and conflict. It is
self-evident that the weaponisation by one actor would be followed by others, thereby
creating an environment ripe for an arms race in outer space. Beyond the vast waste of
resources that this would entail, the weaponisation of space would result in a
proliferation of space debris, which remains an issue of concern to all of us. The
weaponisation of space will also undoubtedly undermine international and national
security.

South Africa therefore believes we should take preventative action now. It is on this
basis that an integral component of our efforts to sustain outer space as an area for
exclusively peaceful purposes is the need to adopt preventative measures to ensure
that space does not become an arena for conflict. We believe that in order to achieve
the widest possible adherence to such rules and norms, open and transparent
multilateral processes are necessary to ensure that States can participate without
discrimination and on the basis of equality.

Chairperson,

It is in this context, that South Africa reiterates its support for the draft Treaty presented
by China and Russia in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on the Prevention of
Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space
Objects (PPWT). This proposal could serve as a useful basis for further discussions in
terms of the elements and scope of future legally-binding instruments. Furthermore, we
hope that the outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts’ (GGE) to consider and
make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding
instrument on PAROS can contribute to the earliest possible commencement of
negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally-binding instrument or
instruments on PAROS. This would be another crucial reason for Member States of the
CD to exercise increased flexibility and a willingness to move beyond narrow interests
to ensure progress and end the impasse in the Conference. I thank you