**Open-ended intergovernmental working group to elaborate the content of an international regulatory framework, without prejudging the nature thereof, relating to the activities of private military and security companies**

**First session 20-24 May 2019**

***Opening Remarks by Ambassador Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko,
Chair-Rapporteur of the intergovernmental working group***

*Check against delivery*

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you today and I thank you for your trust in electing me as the Chair-Rapporteur of the Open-ended intergovernmental working group tasked to elaborate the content of an international regulatory framework, without prejudging the nature thereof, relating to the activities of private military and security companies. I am truly honoured that you have given me the responsibility to conduct the work of this Working Group under the new mandate it was given under resolution 36/11 of October 2017. As you will recall, resolution 36/11 established this Working Group for a period of three years.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the regional coordinators who engaged with me on the preparation of the draft programme of work on 1st of May 2019. The informal consultation with Member States, held on 15 May 2019, was another opportunity to engage directly with delegations on the preparation of the session, including its draft programme of work, in a constructive spirit ahead of our session. Following that meeting, the draft programme of work was made available on the webpage of the IGWG.

The draft programme of work has been developed in line with operative paragraph one of resolution 36/11 which indicates that the work of the IGWG should be informed by the discussion document on elements for an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of private military and security companies. Indeed, you will recall that the report on the sixth and last session of the previous Intergovernmental Working Group contained a framework to structure what we seek to achieve. That framework, reflected in the report on pages 4 and 5, was the outcome of arduous negotiations among delegations that were ultimately most successful in bringing us to that framework. Resolution 36/11 affirmed in Operative Paragraph 1 that said framework would inform the work of the new Working Group. During debate on Resolution 36/11 in the Human Rights Council, regional groupings and delegations reiterated their support for this framework.

To ensure the participation of all in our discussion, notifications of the first session of the Working Group were sent to all Member States. The Secretariat also widely disseminated information about the session to all stakeholders mentioned in res. 36/11.

To conclude, as we move in the new phase of our work, it is important to remind ourselves that this work is important if we are to ensure that private military and security companies are: regulated in an appropriate and fair manner; that human rights abuses are curtailed and that victims have recourse to effective remedies; and that States are able to discharge their regulatory responsibilities based on a strong international regulatory instrument.

I look forward to engaging with you all during this week in an open and transparent process that enables us to make progress in elaborating this framework with a view to better promoting and protecting the human rights of those who engage with and are affected by the activities of private military and security companies.