

Committee on the peaceful uses of Outer Space
Scientific and Technical Subcommittee Sixty-first session
Vienna, 29 January–9 February 2024

Item 10: Near-Earth Objects

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

Italy remains dedicated to advancing the study of Near-Earth objects, delving into both their dynamical and physical aspects. A very active scientific community has recently concluded the NEOROCKS project funded by EU. This initiative aimed to advance in the chemical and physical characterization of Near-Earth objects, through an international network of optical telescopes.

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

I would like to bring to your attention another significant endeavor led by the Italian Space Agency, in collaboration with the Politecnico of Milano, within the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG). Our collaborative efforts consist in the first hypothetical exercise concerning Near-Earth objects, which seeks to simulate a hypothetical threat scenario, specifically an asteroid impact on Earth. Its objective is to propose and experiment with a procedure that space agencies and governmental entities can adopt to organize a synchronized response in such critical situations.

The primary objective consists in defining the tasks required for such a SMPAG coordinated response, pinpointing the responsible entity or entities and proposing internal procedures from each SMPAG member to address the threat. The tasks will cover the technical aspects related to the design of a deflection or reconnaissance mission, as well as procedural and crisis communication elements.

The initial phase, completed in 2022, focussed on the national organisation and coordination, along with defining the task lists to a real threat scenario. The ongoing second phase, started about one year ago, concentrates on discussing how the coordination can be done among different SMPAG delegations.

The report of such exercise will be finalised in October this year.

I thank you for your attention.