Statement of the Delegation of Portugal

at the UNISPACE+50 High-level Segment of the

61st session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Vienna, 20 and 21 June 2018

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

We are here to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. This important milestone gives us an opportunity to highlight the essential role COPUOS has played in assuring the peaceful use of Outer Space.

The importance of this Committee is attested by the steady increase of its membership, reminding us that today, as in 1968, space is and must continue to be the province of all mankind.

Previous commitments are still valid: we must not surrender to the temptation of an arms race in space, since the consequences for our way of life could be utterly catastrophic. But new challenges lay ahead as we envisage space as a promoter of sustainable development.

Portugal strongly supports the peaceful uses of outer space and that space science and technology are essential to successfully address the current and future challenges of social and economic development and sustainability. In particular with regard to communication and navigation systems, natural disaster management and emergency response, food security, climate change and natural resource management.

Space activities play a crucial role in supporting sustainable development, especially in respect to the sustainability of economic growth and global environmental management.

Sustainable development is currently driving the debate about the state of our world and how societies need to respond to the social, economic, environmental, and institutional challenges we are facing. It is also a concept that promotes intra-generational solidarity but also inter-generational solidarity. In other words solidarity with future generations that will be living in a more complex and uncertain world that, in part, will be shaped by our present actions.

According to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we should *"protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and*

production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations".

Portugal is convinced that developing innovative outer space systems and solutions is essential for earth observations and in monitoring climate systems, as well as the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, we must highlight the importance of abiding to the Paris Agreement and the need for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Space systems and space exploration also provide the opportunity to expand our scientific knowledge of outer space, in particular the solar system, extra-solar systems and the Universe as a whole, and last but not least to improve and discover new technologies for outer space activities.

In this regard, the 2030 Space Agenda is a very important endeavour, and we look forward for the creation of a Working Group to further develop this Agenda and its implementation.

Mr. Chairman, Portugal has actively participated in the Working Group on the Long-term sustainability of Outer Space Activities since 2010, in particular through the involvement of experts in three of the four Expert Groups. We are willing to continue to contribute to the efforts to reach a consensus on all guidelines. Portugal was one of the Member States to support the adoption of a first set of guidelines.

We have reached a crucial stage where it is very important to consolidate the results already reached. My delegation wishes to acknowledge the outstanding work of Mr. Peter Martinez as Chairman of the Working Group. Substantial progress has been achieved in reaching consensus on a significant set of guidelines and therefore it is desirable to progress, thereby maintaining the credibility of COPUOS in dealing and contributing effectively to the long term sustainability of outer space activities.

Mr. Chairman, I would now like to review briefly the recent achievements of Portugal in space science and technology.

A large part of the space activities are conducted in the context of ESA membership that started 18 years ago. Presently, Portugal contributes to most European Space programmes, covering key domains of space applications, ranging from satellite telecommunications, global navigation systems, Earth observation, space technology, space sciences and robotic exploration.

The Portuguese Space Community is an active member of international networks, developing complex space technologies and participating in space science and exploration missions. This community is made up of innovative, knowledge intensive businesses, research institutes and public institutions, all strongly engaged in advancing space science, technologies and their application in non-space sectors.

Portugal is an active member of the ESA Gaia Satellite scientific collaboration. Gaia is an exceptional mission, which, through ultra-accurate measurements of the positions of celestial objects, will deliver the first large scale dynamic 3D map of the Galaxy in which we live: the Milky Way.

Very recently, in April 25th, the second Gaia data release was issued, with measurements of almost 1700 million astronomical sources. Portugal contributes to the Gaia mission in several ways, including quality control and image reconstruction of gravitational lenses. Still, we highlight the development of the data visualization web service running at ESA ad which allows any user with an internet connection to interactively explore the huge Gaia data archive. In addition, our developments include the creation of intelligible visual representations of the unimaginable information content of Gaia archive. Well known examples are the sky maps we have created and which became the iconic images of the Gaia Data releases. In our times, visualization of Big Data is one of the most interesting domains in Data Sciences. It is clearly one where the work developed for space can be reused in other fields for the benefit of society.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, Portugal is in the process of establishing the Azores International Research Center in the Azores Archipelago in the fields of oceanography, climatology and other physical sciences. It will have particularly favorable conditions for climate observations due to its location in the central part of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. The Research Center is located near the Santa Maria ESA Satellite Tracking Station that offers terrestrial services for ESA from the Azores, and for other international operators in the field of space, namely in terms of scientific missions and Earth observation.

This again proves our strong commitment to the peaceful use and exploration of outer space.

To conclude, we would like to emphasize the extraordinary work of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, well symbolized by the tireless dedication and commitment of its Director, Simonetta Di Pippo. Thank you.