

## **Statement NL Main Committee COPUOS – General Exchange of Views**

**Delivered by: H.E. ambassador Aldrik Gierveld**

Dear Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the floor.

1. The Netherlands delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Omran Sharaf, on your election as a Chair. Let me assure you of our full support and cooperation during this session and beyond. We are highly convinced that under your leadership we will have a very fruitful and successful meeting.
2. Please allow me also to thank you, Mr. Chairman and Acting Director of UNOOSA, Mr. Niklas Hedman, for the preparation of this Main COPUOS meeting. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Di Pippo for all the work she has done over the past 8 years in her role as UNOOSA Director. We wish her all the best in the continuation of her career.
3. The Netherlands is fully aligned with the statement of the European Union, and I wish to add a few remarks in my national capacity. The Netherlands condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which is a gross violation of international law, humanitarian principles, and the UN Charter. Moreover, as requested by the International Court of Justice, the Netherlands calls on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its aggression and to unconditionally withdraw its troops and any military or irregular armed units which may be directed or supported by it, from the territory of Ukraine, and to respect the latter's territorial integrity and political independence.
4. The Russian Federation's actions undermine the international rule based order, which runs contrary to our work in this Committee which serves the strengthening of this order.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Whether on earth or in outer space, the Netherlands is committed to the international rule of law. Hence, the Netherlands is signatory to all five core United Nations Treaties related to outer space. And accordingly, the Netherlands has established the Dutch Space Act.
6. The number of space activities in the Netherlands is growing structurally, resulting in an increase in the number of Dutch space operators and satellites under Dutch jurisdiction and control. Last year there were five licensees under the Dutch Space Act which operated twenty one Dutch satellites: ten Geostationary satellites and eleven Low Earth Orbit satellites.  
Based on several recent developments the number of satellites under Dutch jurisdiction will increase significantly over the coming years.

7. In light of this, the Netherlands is particularly committed to a safe, secure and sustainable outer space environment. Therefore, the Netherlands is conducting an analysis of how the 21 LTS guidelines match up with our existing regulations and how our current Space Act could be adapted accordingly. The results of this analysis are foreseen this year and will also serve as input for our process to amend our Space Act at a later stage.

Mr. Chairman,

8. As outer space becomes increasingly more crowded, there is a need for reliable and sustainable space traffic management. More than ever our economies, societies and security are dependent on space infrastructure. And yet, our current regime of space traffic management is insufficient and unsustainable.
9. The Netherlands is convinced the international community must strive towards a legally binding instrument for space traffic management, negotiated here, within the framework of the UN. We need governance that enables safe and sustainable space-travel, while providing a global level playing field.
10. Moreover, in developing strategies and adequate regulatory frameworks, we need to include private and public stakeholders. Not only because the space sector is a global market. But because technologies advance rapidly, implicating that we should adopt a technology-open approach as much as possible.
11. A constructive dialogue is currently taking place on a European level, between ESA, the European Commission and member states. And as the outcomes of this dialogue so far state: continued engagement with international organizations such as COPUOS will be key. The Netherlands therefore welcomes discussions on Space Traffic Management within COPUOS.
12. The ongoing deployment of thousands of satellites in the Low Earth Orbit does not only affect in-orbit operations. These satellite constellations have major influence on the visibility of the night skies for ground-based astronomy. Unfortunately, these adverse effects have not been adequately considered. This calls for an internationally agreed regulation, and in our view, this matter falls within the core remit of the UN COPUOS.
13. The Netherlands Delegation wishes to underline the importance of the Dark and Quiet Skies matter and therefore appreciates that this matter is a single issue and/or item for discussion on the agenda of the STS COPUOS meeting of 2023.

Mr. Chairman,

14. Gazing up at the night sky has given us astonishing insights and knowledge. But perhaps the most valued benefit of outer space activities are the contributions to sustainable development.
15. The Netherlands (with our European partners in the Copernicus programme) has been instrumental in the technical development of the TROPOMI instrument. Besides our Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute KNMI, our scientific community and various smaller companies developed applications in support of climate change research and air quality management.
16. The Netherlands supports the use of satellite data for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, the Netherlands funded the Geodata for Agriculture and Water Facility with € 60 mln, which aims to support 4,5 million smallholder food producers with satellite based information services by 2023. At the end of 2020 we have directly reached more than 1,1 million smallholders. More public investment is needed, however, in order to further scale existing information services that help smallholders increase their productivity in an environmentally sustainable manner and ensures efficient use of water. The Netherlands cooperates closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in making data on water productivity in agriculture available.
17. Last year we have also released a grant with the topic: satellite data on behalf of climate mitigation and adaption. The goal is to support the development of satellite based services that have a direct impact on the Netherlands and help achieve the 1,5 degree target of the Paris climate accord. Six organizations have been granted for the feasibility phase and the innovations range from measuring and monitoring of carbon stock in soil; the use of satellite based soil moisture information for water management; to the use of agro forestry for increasing carbon storage.
18. As space is now an indispensable part in our daily lives and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the global community needs clear rules and a forum where dialogue is possible to develop a global consensus. We believe COPUOS and UNOOSA should continue to play an important role in this context and the Netherlands will continue to support the activities in this arena.

Thank you for your attention.