

Statement Netherlands regarding agenda item 5 (Way and means of Maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes)

Delivered by: Mr. A. Visser, Dutch Authority for Digital Infrastructure, The Netherlands.

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Under this agenda-item the Netherlands wishes to underline the importance of measures to reduce the effects of space debris in outer space.

The number of space-active countries and space objects increases every year. The rapidly growing number of new space activities, in particular in the low earth orbit entails several significant technical and legal challenges for the international community. Among these challenges, is the issue of space debris.

Disturbing prognoses indicate a continuing increase of space debris which calls for acceleration of action on space debris mitigation. While post mission disposal measures are crucial, it is equally vital to actively remove space debris as a long-term mitigation strategy to stabilise the space debris environment at a safe level.

Given the exponential rise in space activities and space debris, the Netherlands would like to emphasize that the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines should continue to serve as a guiding framework for international efforts to limit space debris generation.

The Netherlands incorporated the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines in its national legal, regulatory and policy framework for national space activities. We take this opportunity to urge all States, to halt the intentional and unnecessary creation of space debris. We consider such behavior irresponsible, and detrimental to sustainability, safety, and security in outer space. To demonstrate this the Netherlands has recently committed not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests.

We all depend on satellites. They are part of our critical infrastructure: for our economy, climate, science and security. Space debris, whether created intentionally or not, poses a serious threat due to the risk of collisions with space objects. Consequently, the international community shares a collective responsibility to solve this problem. My administration strongly believes that we need to strengthen international agreements on responsible behavior in outer space. The Netherlands remains actively engaged in this matter, collaborating through the various UN processes, and striving to enhance synergy between the various fora involved.

In light of this, the Netherlands supports the development of an international worldwide regime for mitigating space debris generation. This regime should not only include measures that prevent the increase of space debris, but also include measures with a view to reducing the existing amount of space debris already present in outer space.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.