

COPUOS Legal Subcommittee

61st Meeting, 2022

Hybrid

Madame Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Madame Chair,

As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor in this session, I would like to congratulate you, Madame Majaja, on your nomination as Chair of the Legal Subcommittee and formulate our best wishes to fulfil this fundamental and so important role.

We are certain that, under your leadership, the works of this Sub Committee will be successful, and we are looking forward to working with you and the rest of the Members and Observers. Rest assured of Portugal's full cooperation.

We would like to make a recognition to Madame Aoki Setsuko work and her steady leadership during particularly demanding circumstances. Arigato, Madame Setsuko.

Naturally, we also would like to thank UNOOSA and the Secretariat, in the person of Mr Niklas Hedman, for their excellent work in supporting this meeting and the ongoing works, and welcome the New Members: Bangladesh, Kuwait, Panama, Slovenia and especially Angola - a dear and long-standing partner.

Madame Chair,

Notwithstanding our alignment with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of the European Union, under its national capacity Portugal would like to convey in this Subcommittee it's full solidarity with the Ukrainian people and Government.

Our thoughts are with them. We strongly condemn the military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and reaffirm our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The Russian military offensive constitutes an extremely serious violation of international law, of the UN Charter and of the core principles on which the international rules-based order is built.

We support the United Nations Secretary-General assessment that such decision is a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and is inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. This is a most severe breach of International Law.

The current military escalation creates a heightened risk of occurrence of violations of human rights and of the international humanitarian law. We also share a deep concern for the suffering of the millions of Ukrainians that are already in need of humanitarian assistance.

Due to the profound disregard of international law showed by this ongoing military aggression and Russia's destabilising behaviour, its anti-satellite test conducts last November and the comments made by the Head of Roscosmos regarding international cooperation, Portugal is no longer able to support the establishment of a new regional centre for space science and technology education in the Eurasian region, to be hosted by Roscosmos, as proposed by the Russian Federation.

This tragic event should also recall us of the critical use of space for peaceful purposes and UNOOSA's fundamental role in dealing with such challenges in the international scene.

Madam Chair,

Regarding **Space Resources**, Portugal salutes the establishment of the Working Group and the fruitful ongoing consultations lead by Mr. Misztal, as Chair, and Mr. Freeland, as Vice-Chair, in relation to the group's work plan, a good auspice for the fundamental discussions ahead on exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources, under the COPUOS international cooperation framework.

In this respect, Portugal is co-sponsor of the working paper "*Endorsement of the Work Plan of the Working Group on space resources and proposals for the first dedicated International Space Resources Conference under the auspices of the United Nations*", alongside Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg.

We consider that the current workplan, as revised, ensures that the works on space resources can proceed aimed at ensuring that activities are carried out in accordance with the international law and in a safe, sustainable and peaceful manner, for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and we find of the "*utmost importance to collaborate on a multilateral level towards an international framework*" regarding "*the exploration, utilization and exploitation of space resources*".

Hence, the international conferences to be held under the auspices of the United Nations on this topic should be as encompassing as possible.

Portugal welcomes as a single item for discussion the topic of **space debris mitigation**. In fact, the existence of *circa* 166 million objects from 1 mm to 1 cm or more than 1 million debris larger than 1cm orbiting around Earth, - not yet traceable by most system, that operates at 10+ cm, but with a very real ability to cause significant damages on space objects and space operations -, the ever-growing number of launches, the ever-decreasing size of satellites and the utmost congestion of the space orbits urged this dedicated attention, also in the legal subcommittee, to the Long-Term Sustainability of space.

The 2022 edition of the Portuguese Space Agency annual conference - to be held in June, the **New Space Atlantic Summit** - will look precisely at the grand topic of the Sustainability of Space Operations, focusing on the future of Space Logistics and new services in orbit - In-orbit Servicing. We hereby invite all delegations to be present at this event, whose details will be circulated latter.

And in this respect, we welcome the **Symposium** held by the International Institute of Space Law and the European Center of Space Law on the topic of "National laws and regulations to ensure Space Sustainability".

In relation to **Space Traffic Management**, Portugal strongly supports the “**Our Common Agenda**” proposed last year by the UN Secretary-General and “a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations”, that also encompasses a “multi-stakeholder dialogues on outer space” for a peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space. Portugal will actively contribute to the outer space dialogue and promote an international conference on the road to the **Summit of the Future** also addressing the topic of Space Traffic Management.

We find of paramount importance that in the Legal subcommittee we can also move forward in this topic and recall the progresses made in the Joint Communication “An EU Approach for Space Traffic Management”. We consider that progresses must be made, aimed at interoperability and safety, reducing costs and to enable space manoeuvres, regardless of the challenges’ that the set of new regulatory aspects always pose - especially having in consideration such a diverse panorama of recipient’s in this global cooperation endeavour, their technology readiness level and their will to encompass new measures, either binding or non-binding.

We also welcome the Office initiative regarding the establishment of an on-line portal regarding the **registration** of space objects and we look forward to seeing the model version. Portugal will convey additional information that can be useful for the registration process, based on the additional requirements that have been established under our 2019 national space law, and thus contributing to enhance registration practices, transparency and responsibility at large.

Finally, regarding capacity building, also in space law, we recall that Portugal will host this year's edition of the **Space Studies Program**, of the International Space University, an intense two-month professional development course for postgraduate students and professionals of all disciplines, to be held in Lisbon during July and August.

Madam Chair,

I will conclude reaffirming Portugal's full commitment towards COPUOS, and to the Legal Subcommittee in particular, aiming at a fruitful cooperation for a peaceful and a sustainable use of space for all.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Carolina Rêgo Costa

Portuguese Space Agency, Legal Officer