

## **Germany, Item 11**

**UNCOPUOS Legal Subcommittee  
61<sup>st</sup> Session 28 March – 8 April 2022, Vienna**

### **Statement by Germany**

**Agenda Item 11 – General exchange of information and views on legal mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation and remediation measures, taking into account the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee**

Honorable Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

safety and long-term sustainability in outer space are of paramount importance for Germany.

As space debris accumulates in certain orbital regions, especially in the Low Earth Orbit, the number of close encounters between operational spacecraft and space debris is rising. In light of this tremendous increase of spacecraft launched into Earth's orbit, 1807 objects in 2021 to be precise and already more than 400 objects in 2022, the mitigation of space debris is inalienable for a safe and sustainable use of outer space for all humankind.

The continuous increase of space debris poses a true challenge on a global scale. Space debris is not only a threat to endeavors of current and future generations, but also generates immense associated costs, thus impacting negatively on the socio-economic benefits of endeavours. It impedes the safe use of the orbital environment, which is a global common and a scarce resource. Hence, we urge all actors to avoid the intentional destruction of space objects and the deliberate and unnecessary creation of space debris. In this respect, we condemn the test of a direct ascent ASAT missile by Russia against its own satellite on November 15th last year. The destruction of a satellite in low earth orbit has produced a large number of pieces of debris which will impair the free access to and use of space for all States for many years.

More than ever before, the international community must develop clear legal guidance for the purpose of minimizing debris, both, by number and by mass. Thus, we reiterate our commitment to comply with the COPUOS and IADC space debris mitigation guidelines.

While Germany appreciates the increased awareness of a broad range of space actors for their responsibilities in this regard, we urge all actors to adhere to these guidelines with an increased compliance rate. In Germany, space debris mitigation (SDM) requirements are implemented and continuously updated for our national space missions consistent with the aforementioned international guidelines. Recently, also with a view to further improve space debris mitigation in small satellite projects at universities and research institutes supported by the German Space Agency. In a case study to the UK/UNOOSA Promoting Space Sustainability project, we reported about the update of our SDM requirements for the design and operations of the German EnMAP (Environmental Mapping and Analysis Project) mission, successfully launched last Friday, which demand among other things active collision avoidance. In this sense, Germany stays committed to minimizing the impact of its space missions on the orbital environment.

With the emerging developments of techniques and foreseeable implementation of active debris removal missions, we should enhance discussions on related legal aspects, too. Sharing best practices and developing international guidelines for such activities would also serve international transparency and confidence building. As the international community, we will have to monitor closely whether non-legally binding guidelines and best practice suffice to ensure effective space debris mitigation and remediation through the entire mission lifecycle. Otherwise, further legally binding instruments should have to be developed.

In conclusion, we stay committed to engaging in an active and constructive manner also on the legal questions involved with space debris mitigation and look forward to fostering international consensus on the way forward.

Thank you for your kind attention.