



STATEMENT BY THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY OBSERVATORY

The 62nd session of the Legal Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

AGENDA ITEM 14: General exchange of views on the application of international law to small-satellite activities

Read by: Andrew Macpherson (SKAO LOW Legal Manager)

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Chair and distinguished delegates,

Thank you for allowing me the floor. On behalf of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Observatory (SKAO), I am pleased to address this Session. As this is the first time that I take the floor I wish to congratulate you Chair on your election and to thank Mr Niklas Hedman and the Secretariat for arranging this meeting.

Chair,

The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (the “SKAO”) remains concerned by the additional and unintended challenges for professional astronomy, a recognized space activity, caused by the boom in large constellations of satellites of medium and small sizes. These can impact observations at radio frequencies (as sources of radio frequency interference - RFI), and optical and infrared wavelengths (due to reflecting sunlight and thermal emissions). In the case of the Square Kilometre Array project, the radio-frequency emissions by these constellations risk the loss of some observations and impairment of our science.

Chair,

The SKAO follows with interest responses to the questionnaire on the application of international law to small-satellite activities (as contained in Appendix II to the LSC60 Report), in particular the sections dealing with regulatory licensing and registration of small satellites, and as already reported in the Background paper by the Secretariat, *Registration of large constellations and megaconstellations*.

Chair,

Thanks to constructive engagement with satellite operators so far, we remain of the opinion that technical mitigations are possible to protect astronomy and the night sky. We believe it is possible to limit the impact on the SKA telescopes while imposing limited constraints on satellite operators. Strong commitments from industry and UN COPUOS Member State governments will be needed in future to realise these proposals and ensure the investments are safeguarded and the skies remain a sustainable resource for all stakeholders, including

for optical and radioastronomy. This would in particular be relevant in the authorisation process by national agencies. In addition, the SKAO, in its role as co-host of the International Astronomical Union Centre for the Protection of the Dark and Quiet Sky, stands ready to assist UN COPUOS, and can provide technical expertise to support dialogue.

I thank you, Chair.