

ESA Statement, 62nd session of the UNCOPUOS Legal Subcommittee
Agenda item 3. 'General Exchange of Views'
24 March 2023

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

Let me first commend you, Madam Chair, for your able guidance and excellent work leading this Subcommittee. Let me also express our appreciation and gratitude for the excellent work of the Office, including its Acting Director Niklas Hedman, in preparing and conducting this session, thereby enabling continued multilateral exchange and cooperation among the Member States of the Committee.

Distinguished delegates, as a permanent observer, ESA is appreciative of the opportunity to address the Committee and share its efforts and objectives in times of unprecedented significance of space for our global society, boosted by an equally unparalleled transformation of the modern space sector.

As an intergovernmental organisation, ESA is conscient of the value of international law and international cooperation in realising the potential that space holds to help build a sustainable future, contribute to climate objectives, enable new discoveries, bring technological advancement, thrive economic opportunities and inspire people. ESA continues to participate in these endeavours, both as a space agency and a spacecraft operator, and as a mechanism of cooperation among its twenty-two Member States, four Associate Members, two European Cooperating States, Canada, as well as many international partners.

Distinguished delegates, despite the challenges of the pandemic and the impact of geopolitical events, there has been great progress towards the goals set out by ESA. Let me share and highlight some of our milestones from the past year:

- Many space missions brought us historic moments in 2022, including the impressive first images from the James Webb Telescope. The telescope, an international partnership between NASA, ESA and the Canadian Space Agency, is another illustration of how international cooperation can bring ambitious space missions to life.
- ESA is proud to have supplied Artemis I with the European Service Module, paving the way to take humankind back to the Moon. ESA also concluded its first astronaut selection in 13 years. From more than 22500 applicants, five career astronauts and 11 members of an astronaut reserve have been chosen, as well as, for the first time, one astronaut with a physical disability to help develop options for the inclusion of astronauts with physical disabilities in future missions.
- ESA continues on the successful path of space application programmes, including the large navigation flagship Galileo and the Earth observation flagship Copernicus, both carried out with the European Union and demonstrating what can be achieved thanks to the excellent cooperation of European space actors.

- As 2022 drew to a close, the ministers of ESA Member States responsible for space matters gathered in France to strengthen Europe's space ambitions, ensuring a continuous concerted effort to serve citizens in Europe and worldwide. In exceptional times of global opportunities as well as challenges, the overall outcome was a decision to increase ESA's budget by a record 17%.
- Ministers also acknowledged that climate change and space sustainability remain universal themes of critical importance and confirmed their commitment to continue and grow ESA's programmes. This includes new endeavours, for example, a programme together with the European Union on Secure Connectivity named Iris*2, and ScaleUp to encourage entrepreneurship and commercialisation.
- ESA also strengthens its efforts in view of reducing its carbon footprint and implementing life cycle assessments as well as a zero-debris approach for its missions, encouraging partners and other actors to pursue similar paths.

Distinguished delegates, the role and rule of law for space activities continues to be of utmost importance for ESA. The promises of the new space age also bring challenges that we must address collectively and responsibly, first and foremost related to space traffic and the long-term sustainability of space activities. The framework of the United Nations offers a unique multilateral forum for consensus-making and developing space governance, including through law and non-binding instruments.

ESA contributes to the development and application of space law. As one of the first intergovernmental organisations to declare acceptance of the rights and obligations of several of the UN space treaties, we continue to be a responsible space actor and an active permanent observer of this Committee. We advise our Member States, at their request, on questions related to national space legislation and contribute to international standard-setting.

Let me also mention the European Centre for Space Law, the European Centre for Space Economy and Commerce and the European Space Policy Institute – three institutions created by ESA that deliver important inputs and enable networking. In terms of capacity building, the ESA Academy, ESA's overarching educational programme for university students, runs training courses, workshops, and events, including introductory space law courses for university students with a technical or scientific background.

Let me conclude by highlighting ESA's objective of continuing to contribute to the international space community as a responsible and dutiful actor, carrying out space activities for the shared benefits of many, ensuring capacity-building opportunities, further strengthening the rule of law in outer space and continuing to meaningfully contribute as a permanent observer to the work of the Committee.

Thank you.