

Kingdom of the Netherlands – Agenda-item 12 General Exchange of views on the legal aspects of
Space Traffic Management
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Mr Chair, distinguished delegations

Mr Chair, thank you for giving me the floor.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to take this opportunity again to express its support for the Long Term Sustainability Guidelines and, under this agenda item, in particular with respect to space traffic management. Space traffic management remains a topic that requires our urgent attention, and my Government continues to support the identification of the legal aspects of space traffic management.

The issue of space traffic management is closely connected with the notion of free access to outer space as defined in the Outer Space Treaty. The Outer Space Treaty, in particular through the principles of free access, of due regard, and of cooperation and mutual assistance, clearly obliges us to ensure safe and sustainable use of outer space, also for future generations. Without the development of effective space traffic management, through regulation and monitoring, this cannot be ensured. We continue to have a worrying absence of rules on priority, a lack of communication between space operators, causing some owners of space objects to change course in order to avoid collision.

The development of a regulatory framework for STM is indispensable, and must be achieved on an international level. In our view, the ultimate goal would be a legally binding framework, just as traffic rules on earth are legally binding. To further the development of STM, the Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the proposal by Germany for the establishment of a study group to study perspectives on Space Traffic Management within the Sub-Committee. The Challenges are such that a new approach is warranted.

Absent global regulation, my Government welcomes, in the interim, the development by the European Union of Space Legislation, resting on the three principles of safety, resilience, and sustainability.

Finally, Mr Chair, in our view, STM is closely connected to the other two items relating to a safe and sustainable use of outer space: space debris mitigation, including active debris removal, and remediation and the regulation of small satellite activities. It is worth our consideration to merge the discussion on these items.

I thank you for your attention.