

## **IAU statement to be delivered under the Agenda Item 18 at the 59<sup>th</sup> STSC Session.**

Distinguished Ambassador,

Being this our first intervention under your chairmanship, the International Astronomical Union wishes to congratulate you for your election to the Chair of the STSC. We are confident that under your guidance, the work of the Sub-Committee will proceed in the most smooth and effective way.

The IAU also wishes to congratulate the Director of UNOOSA, Mrs. Simonetta Di Pippo and the COPUOS Secretariat for the excellent organization of the Sessions of the COPUOS and its Sub-Committees under the current difficult situation. We wish Mrs. Di Pippo success in her future career's achievements. We also wish to acknowledge the support of the UNOOSA in the organization of the Workshop and the Conference on "Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society" that took place in October 2020 and October 2021, as explained in and A/AC. 105/1257. Results of the Conference are reported in the STSC document A/AC. 105/1255.

.

Mr. Chair, distinguished Delegates,

the IAU represents more than 12,000 professional astronomers from about 90 Countries, many of them also present in this international forum. The IAU main mission is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation.

Astronomical observations are instrumental to most space activities, from the support given to space exploration, to planetary defence providing substantial warning for potentially hazardous asteroids impacting the Earth, as well as to establishing the celestial reference frame, critical for navigation and defence.

For this reason, the IAU is constantly bringing to the attention of the STSC any interference that can negatively affect the astronomical observations, the most recent and relevant one being the impact caused by the deployment of large satellite constellations in Low Earth Orbit. On this important issue the IAU has joined the Delegations of Austria, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Slovakia, Spain and the Observers ESO and SKAO, in preparing the Working Paper A/AC.105/C.1/L.396 "Protection of dark and quiet skies" which has been presented by the distinguished Delegate of Chile under the Agenda Item 18.

One of the aims of the Working Paper, as well as other actions at the level of the UN Committees, is to actively contribute to the discussion about the new scenario created by the large constellations and eventually achieve consensus on guidelines on the optimal use of the Low Earth Orbit shell.

In parallel with these top-level actions, the IAU is pursuing a more pragmatic line, involving the astronomical community and all stakeholders in developing and implementing measures that can mitigate the impact of the satellite constellations.

Mr. Chair, distinguished Delegates,

in this respect, the IAU is happy to announce that it has constituted an **International Coordination Centre for the protection of the Dark and Quiet Sky from Satellite Constellation Interference**. The main partners in the Centre are the US NSF National Optical and Infrared Laboratory based in Tucson, Arizona and the International Square Kilometre Array Observatory, whose headquarters are in Manchester, UK. Several other International Institutions will collaborate with the Centre, whose activity will be covering four main areas:

- Information repository of all relevant data about the satellite constellations
- Technical developments and interaction with industry aimed at technological mitigating solutions
- National and International Policy assessment in support of the IAU top-level actions
- Community engagement

The Memorandum of Understanding for the Centre has been signed on last February 2nd and the Centre will officially begin its activity on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

The IAU is confident that the new Centre will be instrumental in preserving those unique and precious assets for scientific and technological progress as well as for culture and society which are the sky and the outer space. The IAU hopes to get the generous support of all World Nations in this important endeavour.

Thank you for your attention.

[about 4 minutes reading]