



European Union

**EU Statement on
Agenda item 4: “General exchange of views and
introduction of reports submitted on national activities”.**

**59th session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee
United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
(COPUOS)**

Vienna, 7 – 18 February 2022

Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey[§], the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Norway[†], Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

Please allow me to welcome you as Chair and assure you of our full support and cooperation. I would also like to thank Director Di Pippo and the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) for the thorough preparations of this meeting.

At the outset, I would like to underline that the EU and its Member States remain committed to actively contributing to the work of Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Subcommittees. The increasing importance of COPUOS and its work is illustrated by the growing membership of the Committee, which has now increased to 100 Member States. In this connection, I would like to welcome the new members: Angola, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Panama and Slovenia. We are confident that they will actively contribute to international cooperation in the peaceful uses and exploration of outer space and for the benefit of the work of COPUOS.

[§] Candidate Country

* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

[†] Norway is a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

The EU and its Member States continue to actively promote the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and are strongly committed to safeguarding the long-term use of outer space for peaceful purposes, on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. We stress the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures and the need to ensure responsible behaviour in outer space in the framework of the United Nations for the benefit and in the interest of all countries.

As a firm believer in multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, the EU and its Member States support COPUOS and its Subcommittees as unique platforms for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, including on the development of international space law, international norms and standards, guidelines, best practices, and other transparency and confidence building measures related to the long-term sustainability of outer space affairs. We encourage all Member States to continue their constructive and result-oriented efforts to advance the important issues on the agenda of COPUOS and its Subcommittees. We recognize the important role of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in supporting their work.

The EU and its Member States underline that the space treaties developed in the UN framework constitute the cornerstone of the global governance of outer space and that compliance with existing international law must be ensured. This UN framework is complemented by space-related resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly.

We reaffirm the need to foster increased international cooperation, and to establish principles of responsible behaviour, and sustainability of space activities in the common interest of present and future generations. Furthermore, we stress the need to strengthen commitments to avoid potentially harmful interference with the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, to facilitate equitable access to outer space. Thus, we believe that it is important to develop initiatives that will alleviate tensions and increase confidence and mutual trust.

Chair,

In these challenging times in multilateral fora, it was a great achievement that COPUOS and subsequently the UN General Assembly in 2019 could adopt the Preamble and the 21 Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. This was a culmination of many years of joint efforts and a testimony that multilateralism works in the space sector and that it produces practical and useful results. The establishment of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (WG-LTS) under this Subcommittee was yet another positive

step. This should facilitate the sharing of experiences, good practices and lessons learnt from the implementation of the adopted guidelines, help to raise awareness and capacity-building, and address new challenges for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, such as mega-constellations.

The EU and its Member States appreciate the efforts of WG Chair, Mr. Umamaheswaran, to advance discussions on its terms of reference, methods of work and work plan. We encourage all COPUOS Member States to engage constructively and in a spirit of flexibility with a view to reaching consensus during this session of the STSC so that the Working Group can start its substantive work in addressing challenges in outer space, including sharing experiences, practices and lessons learnt from the concrete implementation of the 21 Guidelines.

The EU and its Member States stand ready to share their experiences with the implementation of the 21 LTS Guidelines and we recall the many Conference Room Papers (CRPs) and statements already submitted in this regard. Within the EU Space Surveillance and Tracking (EUSST) Support Framework established in 2014, the EU and its Member States provide spacecraft collision avoidance, re-entry and fragmentation services by operating and developing Space Surveillance and Tracking capabilities. Following the new EU Space Programme for 2021-27, further services such as space debris removal techniques and space debris mitigation are envisaged in order to support safe access and return from outer space and in-orbit operations. Through these EUSST services, the EU is already contributing on a daily basis to the implementation of the LTS Guidelines. Furthermore, the EU, together with the European Space Agency (ESA), considering their long-lasting cooperation, are playing an important role to further support the implementation of the LTS Guidelines within Europe and beyond. Considerable work is underway in several EU Member States to implement the LTS Guidelines, for example through drafting or amending national space laws, on debris mitigation, international cooperation, as well as capacity building measures/mechanisms.

The EU and its Member States would like to underline the importance of implementing the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of COPUOS. It is also in this context that we believe that UN Member States should fully implement the 21 LTS Guidelines in order to protect outer space from long-lived debris to ensure long-term orbital sustainability. It is of utmost importance that all Member States avoid as much as possible the creation of space debris, in order to preserve the safe, secure and sustainable use of outer space in a peaceful manner for present and future generations. Considering that destructive anti-satellite missile tests create space debris and pose significant risks to

outer space activities, which are irreconcilable with a sustainable use of outer space, we urge the UN Member States to avoid such harmful activities.

Chair,

Last year's agreement in COPUOS on the Space2030 Agenda and its Implementation plan and the subsequent adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution on the "Space2030" Agenda: space as a driver of sustainable development, was yet another great achievement and a testimony to COPUOS' ability to deliver on its mandate. The EU and its Member States welcome UNOOSA's projects on space science, applications and technologies that have a great potential to help address major challenges of our time such as climate change or COVID-19 and realize the global agenda. The EU contributed to discussions at the 2021 World Space Forum organised by UNOOSA and Austria under the motto "Space4Climate Action", presenting the potential of space assets to the mitigation of climate change.

Finally, the EU and its Member States welcome that outer space issues relevant to COPUOS feature so prominently in the UN Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda". We recognise the need for the international community to come together and discuss ways and means to reinforce space governance in the interest of maintaining a sustainable outer space for the benefit of present and future generations.

Thank you, Chair.