New Zealand National Statement

Agenda Item 4: General Exchange of Views

59th Session of the COPUOS

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

7-18 February 2022

Check Against Delivery

Thank you Chair,

Tēnā tatou katoa. We would like to join our colleagues congratulating you on your election and in recognising your work and the work of the secretariat in ensuring this meeting can proceed under these challenging circumstances. We are pleased to be back here with you all and are looking forward to working together to progress the important work on the agenda.

New Zealand would also like to take this opportunity to thank Director Simonetta Di Pippo for her dedication to UNOOSA over the past eight years. We have enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the Director over the years, and have appreciated her commitment to promoting the benefits of space to all corners of the Earth. We wish her all the best in her next endeavours.

Chair

Aotearoa New Zealand is wholly committed to the peaceful, safe, and sustainable use of space. As our space industry continues to grow, we are seeking to open access to space, foster innovative technology, and take a pioneering and transparent government approach.

New Zealand's space sector has seen the emergence of many companies developing innovative technology and cutting-edge research. We continue to support technologies that are critical for sustainable access to space. In November, New Zealand signed a memorandum of understanding with Astroscale, a commercial Active Debris Removal company, with an agreement to cooperate on space safety and sustainability. New Zealand, in partnership with the German Aerospace Centre, announced the funding of eight joint projects to further research in future communications in space, propulsion technologies and Synthetic Aperture Radar. This will help to further enable the monitoring of climate impacts, prepare to better

respond to natural disasters and develop technologies which will benefit space activities for decades to come.

Our work with the NGO Environmental Defence Fund to develop and launch MethaneSAT, New Zealand's first national space mission, continues. Rocket Lab and the University of Auckland in the process of developing the MethaneSAT Mission Operations Control Centre, while a New Zealand based science-team is leading the Missions research on using satellite data to reliably identify and measure methane emissions from agricultural sources.

In order to ensure our own space regulation facilitates innovation and commercial activity in a manner consistent with our commitment to the peaceful, safe and sustainable uses of space, we are in the process of reviewing our Outer Space and High-altitudes Activities Act. The review is scheduled to report to the New Zealand Parliament in in the coming months. Although our legislation is only four years old, this review recognises the fast-moving nature of the space industry and importance of continuous review to ensure our regulatory regime remains fit for purpose.

Chair

One of the topics on our agenda this week is Space Debris. This is a hugely important topic for us all as it goes to the heart of sustainability in space. We are therefore deeply concerned by the increase of anti-satellite missile testing, which risks destabilising the space environment as well as peace and security on Earth. The deliberate creation of space debris as we saw in November is irresponsible and heightens the risk of in-orbit collisions between debris and active space systems putting all those who rely on space infrastructure – in other words all of us – at risk. New Zealand takes a firm, principled approach to these issues and we will continue to speak out to ensure our interests, and those of all countries, are not compromised.

Chair

2022 marks an important turning point for the Long-term Sustainability Working Group, as we move into the substantive work programme. Aotearoa New Zealand anticipates engaging actively in this process. It is in all our interests that we safeguard the sustainability of space to ensure we can all continue to benefit from the advances that space-based infrastructure affords us. As a society we are becoming increasingly reliant on space technologies, from supporting everyday services to addressing complex large-scale problems like environmental monitoring, climate change and disaster response and management. In recent weeks we have seen the critical role that space based infrastructure has played in helping us to understand the magnitude and ongoing global implications following the devastating eruption in Tonga. It

is in all our interests that we safeguard the sustainability of space to ensure we can all continue to benefit from the advances that space-based infrastructure affords us.

The Long-term Sustainability Guidelines, adopted in 2019, were important in the development of new norms and standards to maintain access to, and use of, space. The ability for COPUOS to agree these guidelines shows the value of a multilateral approach to space sustainability and are foundational in ensuring we can achieve our shared goals. New Zealand urges all space actors to implement the Guidelines and we look forward to a productive, constructive discussion in the working group.

Chair

Finally, and separately to our work here, another further aspect critical to the safe and sustainable use of outer space is the articulation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours in outer space. New Zealand was pleased to have co-sponsored the resolution in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly on responsible behaviours in outer space. While existing international law provides the core regulatory framework for all activities in outer space, further specific rules, norms and standards are needed to effectively operationalise these obligations. We welcome the work being done in that regard by our colleagues in Geneva.

Thank you Chair. We look forward to a productive session.