

## **Statement Netherlands regarding agenda item 7 (Space Debris)**

Delivered by: Alfred Visser, Dutch Authority for Digital Infrastructure.

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, Sixtieth session, Vienna, 6–17 February 2023.

Thank you Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

As this is the first time we take the floor, we would like to thank you for chairing this sixtieth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. We would also like to thank our acting director mister Niklas Hedman and the United Nations Office Of Outer Space Affaires for their continues and excellent preparation of this meeting.

Our deepest condolences go to the victims and their families of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

The Netherlands welcomes Guatemala and Uzbekistan as the newest members of the Committee.

Mister Chair,

The Delegation of the Netherlands is pleased to have the opportunity to underline the importance of taking measures to reduce space debris, since space debris is an issue of global concern that threatens our use of space for the benefit of humankind.

Currently there are more than 5,000 operational satellites in orbit. The next few years around 10,000 new satellites are expected to be launched and by 2040 the total number of satellites in orbit could reach a 100,000. This continuing exponential increase of launching satellites into orbit in the coming decades will cause space traffic management problems, interference with astronomy and stargazing and the number of collisions and subsequent space debris are likely to increase rapidly as well.

The proliferation of space debris poses a serious risk to the safety, security and sustainability of space activities. It is vital to protect the outer space environment since all critical infrastructures sectors rely on space and space infrastructure is critical for our daily lives on earth.

The Netherlands recognises that space debris is a growing problem. Accordingly, the development of a Dutch space situational awareness capability is a new key priority of the new Dutch Space Policy for the coming years. As a result of this new Dutch Space Policy, the Netherlands joined the EU SST Partnership at the end of 2022. As part of this EU SST partnership, the Netherlands will develop a national space situational awareness capability by modifying two SMART-L band radars to detect and monitor satellites and space debris. This Space Situational Awareness information received from these radars will be processed in a national space situational awareness database which will be shared with the EU and other countries to contributed to the international space surveillance network.

Mister Chair,

To limit future generations of space debris, the implementation of international guidelines, standards as well as national policy and a legal and regulatory framework for space activities are essential. In this regard the Netherlands supports the work of COPUOS and the new LTS Working Group and encourages all states to properly implement the LTS guidelines as well as the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines.

Regarding our national regulation, the Netherlands incorporates internationally recognised guidelines and standards relating to space debris into its national regulatory framework for space operations under Dutch jurisdiction. The Dutch satellite operators therefore have to comply with the international space debris mitigation guidelines and requirements to contribute to stabilising the space debris environment at a safe level.

Given the growth of the mega constellations of hundreds and even thousands of commercial satellites and the problems this development entails, the Netherlands recognizes that spaceflight safety is a global challenge. While international discussions on Space Traffic Management continues within UN COPUOS and the EU, risks in space continue to rise.

Since Space Traffic Management is an international safety issue, it requires international coordination and harmonised rules. The Netherlands believes that the international community should strive towards globally coordinated rules for Space Traffic Management, negotiated here within the framework of the UN. We need governance to ensure that space remains a safe and secure environment, while providing a global level playing field.

Mister Chair,

The growing hazard of space debris requires that we need to take steps to manage and reduce the space debris problem. Since we all depend on satellites: for our economy, science and security, the international community has a collective responsibility to tackle the growing threats of space debris. Therefore the Netherlands calls on all member states to carry out their space activities in a transparent, safe and responsible manner to help to achieve our common goal of maintaining a space environment that is safe and sustainable for all.

Thank you mister Chair.