

**New Zealand National Statement**

**Agenda Item 17: Dark and Quiet Skies**

**60<sup>th</sup> Session of the COPUOS**

**Scientific and Technical Subcommittee**

**6-17 February 2023**

**Check Against Delivery**

Chair, Distinguished Delegates

Aotearoa New Zealand is pleased to have the opportunity to share our views on the topic of dark and quiet skies for science and society. Like many countries, New Zealand has a growing space industry, strengths in astronomical research, and a deep cultural connection to the night sky.

Chair,

New Zealand recognises the unintended impact of satellite constellations on uses of the night sky and we thank the international astronomical community for their continued efforts in developing mitigation approaches. New Zealand's astronomical community is involved in world-leading research that has helped to shape our view of the universe. Astronomy also played a significant role in the early discovery of New Zealand by Polynesians that navigated with the stars, and the visibility of satellite constellations in the night sky has an impact on the continued practice of Māori astronomy, tātai arorangi. New Zealand hopes that the impact of satellite constellations on traditional, cultural uses of the night sky will be considered as part of the wider discussion of dark and quiet skies within COPUOS.

New Zealand is also an ideal location for stargazing, home to the Aoraki Mackenzie Dark Sky Reserve, the world's largest dark sky reserve. With a number of dark sky sanctuaries, New Zealand has a growing astro-tourism industry that relies on skies free of light pollution.

Chair,

We also acknowledge the benefits that satellite constellations offer for global connectivity, environmental monitoring, humanitarian aid and disaster relief, along with the other societal benefits that our growing global space industry enables. We thank satellite operators that have voluntarily implemented measures to mitigate the impact

of their activities on uses of the night sky, and for their continued engagement on this issue. Such measures may be relevant for both constellations and single satellites.

New Zealand continues to be supportive of discussions bringing together satellite operators, astronomers, policy makers and other stakeholders to work on pragmatic approaches to minimising the impact of satellite constellations on all uses of the night sky. It is clear that global coordination on this issue is needed, and New Zealand supports further consideration of issues related to the impact of satellite constellations on visible-light astronomy within COPUOS. However, we believe that the International Telecommunications Union would be better placed to consider the issue of satellite interference with radio astronomy.

Finally Chair, New Zealand encourages the ongoing efforts being undertaken by the scientific community, satellite operators, interested nations and other groups to address the challenges satellite constellations pose to uses of the night sky. We look forward to continuing our engagement on this matter.

Thank you Chair.