

Czech Republic, Item 3

Dear Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the delegation of the Czech Republic, allow me first to reiterate our condemnation of the Russian aggression in Ukraine which lasts for almost 1 year.

On a more positive note, it should be mentioned that after the Covid-19 pandemic, COPUOS has also returned to the in-person/hybrid format which again gives us the opportunity to gather here all together to discuss and strengthen the multilateral cooperation in outer space activities. In coherence with this attitude, we wish to reiterate and highlight the importance of international cooperation and collaboration in order to minimize the risks of harmful impacts of increased activity in outer space and maximise the benefits of space for all humankind.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The main interests of the Czech Republic's space activities lie in the fields of Earth Observation, Navigation, Telecommunications, Launchers, Space Science and Exploration and Space Safety. The Czech government's financial contributions to space activities in European Space Agency exceeded 60 million euros annually. Our memberships in the European Space Agency and the European Union remain the main pillars of the development of our space activities and participation in space projects.

From the national perspective, the year 2022 has been very successful and remarkable for the Czech Republic's space policy and outer space activities in general and precisely has been formed by two significant milestones.

The first of them has been historically the 2nd Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During our six-month Presidency, we reached an agreement on the Secure Connectivity proposal, which was a main space priority of our Presidency. The Secure Connectivity is a forthcoming mega-constellation of satellites, now to be called IRIS², providing a secured connection for governmental and non-governmental purposes across the European Union.

We have also raised attention to the space data exploitation among the European Union member states, which was the topic of the informal Competitiveness Council of EU ministers responsible for a space policy.

During the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union also many space-related events took place. I would especially highlight two of them. The EU Space Week which took place in October 2022 in Prague and the Czech Republic Co-organised this event together with the European Commission and the Agency for the EU Space Programme (EUSPA). At this point, it is worth mentioning that The Czech Republic is proud to be EUSPA's host country. The other one was Czech Space Week, which is the annual space event but last year it had a real international overlap thanks to the main conference part Space2Business which has been dedicated to startups and newcomers to the space business environment.

The 2nd milestone of the year 2022 has been the participation of the Czech delegation at the European Space Agency Council at the ministerial level, which was held in November last year. When the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union reached a compromise on the Secure Connectivity proposal in a very short time frame. This also won the confidence of the European Space Agency member states, which have subscribed 650 million euros to the European Space Agency's optional Secure Connectivity programme.

The European Space Agency Ministerial Council has brought one more great success to the Czech Republic, specifically when a Czech citizen, Mr Aleš Svoboda, has become a member of the ESA astronaut reserve team. Which after 44 years brings the opportunity for the Czech citizen to be part of human spaceflight. This achievement is significant for the Czech Republic and its space policy's current and future developments.

Apart from already mentioned, the Czech Republic strengthens relations with countries all around the world on a bilateral and multilateral level.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, allow me to briefly address the STSC agenda items, with a special focus on those which overlap with the very timely topic of Space Safety:

The Czech industry and scientific institutions are actively involved in the observation and development of technologies for SSA activities, namely in space debris monitoring, Space weather and Near-Earth objects. Under the framework of ESA programmes, our industry and academia actively contribute to related space missions such as the planetary defence mission HERA, space debris removal mission Clearspace-1 or the dedicated Space Weather monitoring mission to Lagrange Point-5 (aka Vigil). We are involved in the development of the ESA's Collision risk Estimation and Automated Mitigation system.

In the EU agenda, we are currently in the ongoing process of integrating our national SST capabilities into the EU SST framework which the Czech Republic and other 7 EU member states joined in

November 2022 and which lead to the transformation from the EU SST Consortium into the EU SST partnership with its aim to strengthen European capabilities in space debris monitoring and in the provision of related satellite protection services based on EU SST data.

Our delegation also sees the need for further and deeper deliberation of the challenging Space Traffic management agenda, which will soon represent a key and basic element for ensuring the safe and sustainable use of orbital regimes. Closer cooperation between STSC and LSC is essential to find consensus on globally acceptable STM governance.

With regard to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, we support the work of new LTS Working group and also a process of the implementation of the existing LTS guidelines at the national, ESA and EU levels and we are working on the new national space legislation where the LTS principles will be reflected in the most positive way.

We also welcome the inclusion of the “General exchange of views on dark and quiet skies for science and society” in the STSC and we will address our national position in a statement dedicated to this agenda item.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

Despite the overall global growth and achievements in the mentioned areas, we have seen some very irresponsible actions in recent years that have negatively affected the space environment. We, therefore, call on UN COPUOS Member States to avoid such actions and behaviours that would, in particular, generate a high volume of space debris that poses significant risks to current and future outer space activities especially taking into account the operation of space-based infrastructure and its usage and interoperability in our everyday life.

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to report that within the framework of the National Space Plan, the Czech space sector continues its work and the rapid growth of the Czech space industry and the indicative increase in funds invested in it can be perceived as a positive signal. Czech industry and academia are involved in more than 170 demanding space projects since the year 2020. In 2022, 5 satellites with educational, scientific and commercial applications were launched.

The Czech Republic has also a very strong startup scene where most of the startups focus on the exploitation of space data which we found as a progressive way forward. Bearing in mind that space

data are growing rapidly every year and it is necessary to use them in a responsible and meaningful way because of their additional value which can be found across many sectors.

We are also actively raising public awareness of space activities across Czech society, particularly by organizing events for the public or experts to inform about space activities in the Czech Republic.

Mr Chair,

In conclusion, let me assure you that the Czech Republic remains committed to international cooperation in outer space at all levels and would like to reiterate its strong support for the work and the mission of the UN COPUOS and its Subcommittees.

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates, I thank you for your kind attention.