



STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE
SIXTY-FIRST SESSION**

FEBRUARY 2024

AGENDA ITEM NO 12: FUTURE ROLE AND METHOD OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (DQS)

To be delivered by: Ms A Sangoni

Chairperson,

Regarding the future method of work, South Africa strongly believes that the topic of the Dark and Quiet Skies should surface within this multilateral forum of the COPUOS as well, as the relevant astronomical scientific knowledge of most States are impacted by current developments in the placing of mega satellites in the low earth orbit. South Africa is also appreciative of the co-sponsors, and the Group of Friends for their hard work and dedication to remain steadfast in striving to have the issue of Dark & Quiet Skies in the Agenda of this Sub-Committee, since South Africa has a vibrant scientific community working on both radio and optical astronomy.

Chairperson,

Mega Satellite Constellations have been deployed in many parts of the world and people have access to the signal. Customers are already using Mega Satellite Constellation services at the same time when the agenda item on the Dark and Quiet Skies is being discussed. The optical astronomy and radio astronomy facilities around the world are already experiencing harmful interference. South Africa is keen to work with all delegations in a bid to finalise the scope, duration and title of an agenda item related to Dark and Quiet Skies and Mega Satellite Constellations. This conclusion is key for recommendations to the Committee at its sixty-seventh session for inclusion on the agenda of the subcommittee.

Chairperson,

South Africa proposed a new agenda item at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to protect Radio Quiet Zones (RQZ) from Mega Satellite Constellations. A RQZ is a recognized geographic area within which the usual spectrum management procedures are modified for the purpose of reducing interference with the radio telescopes. The ITU approved a resolution to study technical and regulatory provisions to protect telescopes that use primary allocated frequency bands in the RQZ from Mega Satellite Constallations. Studies of the ITU will continue until 2027 and South Africa is looking forward to the outcomes of the Studies.

Chairperson,

South Africa supports a conference room paper on the Protection of Dark and Quiet Skies for science and society. While satellite constellations in the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) have benefits, it is their large number, sun-reflection and radio-frequency emission that have a serious impact on

astronomical observation. It is for this reason, South Africa supports the proposal to introduce the item in the agenda of the next 5 STSC sessions for the protection of Dark and Quiet Skies for science and society, and the effects of large constellations of satellites on astronomy and the night skies. South Africa believes that the above two should co-exist with more caution and cooperation between the operators. In this regard, South Africa would prefer a streamlined scope with parameters and boundaries, that will be focused and geared to reach results rather than an open ended scope that may open much room additions and not reach desired results.

Thank you, Chairperson