

New Zealand National Statement

Item 4: General exchange of views

Sixty-first session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

29 January to 9 February 2024, Vienna

As Delivered

Thank you Chair,

Tēnā koutou katoa, or greetings in te reo Māori, New Zealand's indigenous language.

I would firstly like to join colleagues in recognising your efforts Chair, and the work of the secretariat, in delivering this meeting and supporting ongoing discussions on these important issues. I assure you of New Zealand's full support and look forward to productive discussions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Director Holla-Maini on her appointment to the head of UNOOSA. New Zealand looks forward to working closely with her.

Chair

Aotearoa New Zealand remains committed to the peaceful, safe, and sustainable use of space.

The peaceful use of space is fundamentally linked with respect for international law here on Earth and lies at the heart of COPUOS's role. In that context, it is important to reiterate New Zealand's condemnation of Russia's illegal war of aggression in Ukraine, which represents a grave and ongoing breach of international law.

Chair

I am pleased to report that it has been another busy year for New Zealand in space. In addition to continuing a steady tempo of commercial space launch activity, 2023 saw the delivery of two milestone documents.

New Zealand's National Space Policy was released in May and sets out the values and objectives which underpin New Zealand's space policies, strategies and engagements.

In July, the Aotearoa New Zealand Aerospace Strategy was announced. The Strategy provides a strong foundation for the rapid changes taking place in outer space and related sectors and highlights New Zealand's commitment to continue to support space activities, including through international partnerships and connections.

Chair

We have been encouraged by the continued focus on the Long-term Sustainability Guidelines, which are key to ensuring that all humankind will be able to access the benefits of the use of space, both now and into the future. Last year saw extensive discussions and 19 separate Conference Room Papers on this topic and demonstrated the importance of this issue for a wide range of States.

We continue to encourage all States to implement these guidelines and to actively contribute to discussions to share their experiences as well as identifying new areas that the current guidelines may not address. We look forward to the continued progress of the LTS Working Group at this session.

Chair

New Zealand shares the concerns of many delegations over the growing risk of space debris and its potential impact on both space assets and the critical services those assets provide on Earth.

As a launching state, we take our responsibility for minimising the generation of debris very seriously. Consideration of debris mitigation remains a key aspect of our space regulatory regime, including both through licensing requirements and the ongoing monitoring of objects launched from New Zealand through our Space Regulatory and Sustainability Platform.

We have prioritised work to address risks posed by debris already in orbit. This has included developing a policy on licensing Active Debris Removal (ADR) and On-Orbit Servicing activity in the past year.

Chair

We look forward to the opportunity to advance discussions on the issue of Dark and Quiet Skies. COPUOS has asked the STSC to consider this issue and provide a recommendation on the scope, duration and title of an item for COPUOS to take these discussions forward. We urge States to engage in this task meaningfully and, in the spirit of Vienna, with a willingness to find a shared solution.

For the manifold benefits of space, the impact of space activity on the night sky is real and growing. The international discussion on this topic has benefited from years of diligent and empathetic diplomacy, led by a number of States as well as the hard work of many organisations. We must now provide an effective mechanism to carry these discussions towards an outcome.

Chair

As I conclude I would like to highlight and share our appreciation for the important work on promoting the empowerment of women in space, delivered by UNOOSA in conjunction with Canada at the Space4Women Expert Meeting in October last year and as highlighted again during their side event this week. This work contributes to the UN SDGs and – significantly for COPUOS – will help to ensure that the benefits of space activity can be shared by all humankind. We look forward to the publishing of the Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit later this year.

Chair and Distinguished Delegates. We look forward to a productive session.

Thank you.