



STATEMENT BY THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY OBSERVATORY

The 66th session of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

AGENDA ITEM 4: General Exchange of Views

Read by: Ms Shelley Decker (SKAO Legal Manager)

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Chair and distinguished delegates,

Thank you for allowing me the floor. On behalf of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO), I am pleased to address the 66th Session of UN COPUOS. As it is the first time I take the floor, allow me to congratulate you on your election. We would like to express our gratitude to Mr Niklas Hedman and the Secretariat for arranging this meeting. We note with gratitude the return to an in-person format and look forward to engaging directly with delegations.

Chair,

The SKAO is the legal entity created by multilateral treaty to drive the Square Kilometre Array project (the 'SKA'), envisaged as one of the largest ever scientific projects. On 5 December 2022, the SKAO Construction Commencement Ceremonies were held simultaneously in our three sites, marking a new era for the project: the formal start of construction of what will be the most advanced radio telescope in the world. This followed eighteen months of preparatory activities to ensure that construction can begin with the consent and support of the indigenous peoples in regions where the SKA will be sited. In addition, the effort of the global SKA community since the approval of construction activities in June 2021 has enabled the award of 475 million Euros of contracts, covering major infrastructure and the antennas for both the SKA-Low and SKA-Mid telescopes, located in Australia and South Africa respectively.

Chair,

The SKAO supports the recognition by the 65th session of UN COPUOS that astronomical observations for both optical and radio astronomy are an essential aspect of space activities and should be protected from interference. We note with satisfaction that the protection of the astronomical sky was included in the recent communique from the *Summit of the G7 Science and Technology Ministers*, I quote: "We recognize the importance of continued discussion, in the UN COPUOS and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) frameworks, as well as with the International Astronomical Union (IAU) on the impact of large constellations of satellites on astronomy for the protection of the dark and quiet

skies”; And by the recent *European Council* statement on "Fair and sustainable use of space” and I quote “ACKNOWLEDGES that the effects of light pollution, and electromagnetic interference in particular, from satellite constellations must be taken into consideration and mitigation measures put in place to minimise negative impacts on astronomical observations and research worldwide.” The *European Council* ended its statement by specifically welcoming the efforts of the UN COPUOS in this regard.

Chair,

As a permanent observer in UN COPUOS, and a founding member of the IAU Centre for the protection of the Dark and Quiet Skies from Satellite Constellation Interference, the SKAO stands fast to collaborate with the Committee and its Subcommittees in matters related to the sustainable use of space and the protection of the dark and quiet skies. Also, as a Sector Member of the Radiocommunication Sector of the International Telecommunication Union, the SKAO is working with colleagues and stakeholders around the world to protect radio astronomy observations, in particular from Radio Quiet Zones, and contributing to a more equitable and effective use of the radio spectrum.

Chair,

With the return to fully in-person meetings, we applaud the quality and number of side events planned for this 66th session of UN COPUOS. The SKAO is proud of being one of the co-sponsors of the photo exhibition called “Our fragile Space”, where the effects of the fast proliferation of objects in space are beautifully and dramatically represented in pictures. We would also like to invite delegations to the side event “Benefits of Astronomy for Society” to held on the 7th of June hosted by Spain, and co-sponsored by Chile and Bulgaria. And finally, we are pleased to see the European Space Policy Institute and the Secure World Foundation hosting an event on the 31st of May titled “UN COPUOS and ITU regimes: synergies and best practices?”.

Chair,

We are glad to see how high the awareness of the committee is regarding the need to protect the Dark and Quiet Skies, and we look forward to engaging with delegations interested in the collaborative efforts between industry and the astronomical community.

Chair,

We gave statements under Agenda Items 6 (STSC60 Report), and 7 (LSC62 Report). We wish you a constructive session.

I thank you, chair.