



**STATEMENT BY THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY OBSERVATORY**

The 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Legal Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the  
Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

**AGENDA ITEM 13:** *General exchange of views on the application of international  
law to small-satellite activities.*

**Read by:** Dr Theunis Kotzé (SKAO Head of Legal)

**Date:** 15-26 April 2024

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Chair and distinguished delegates,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity on behalf of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) to address the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Legal Subcommittee of COPUOS on this important issue.

Chair,

The SKAO, a technical international intergovernmental organization created to drive a 50-year radioastronomy project, is grateful for the growing cooperation on small-satellite activities between industry and scientific projects such as ours. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the impact of large constellations of satellites on astronomy. To guarantee the safety and sustainability of outer space activities, including astronomy, we believe those activities should be carried out within existing international frameworks, including the *United Nations treaties and principles on outer space*, the *ITU Constitution and Convention* and the *ITU Radio Regulations*, and non-binding instruments such as COPUOS' *Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines* and *Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Affairs*.

Chair,

Scientific investigations in outer space first appear in the important *Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space* adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 1962 (XVIII) of 13 December 1963. The freedom of scientific investigations in outer space was recognized in Article I the *Outer Space Treaty*, followed by a plea for facilitation and encouragement of international cooperation in scientific investigations. Regarding the *Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Affairs*, we are of the opinion that direction can be found in Guidelines A.4 (equitable, rational and efficient use of the radio frequency spectrum and the various orbital regions used by satellites), C.4 (to raise awareness of space activities), A.5 (enhancing the practice of registering space objects), and B.8 (design and operation of space objects).

Chair,

Several astronomers had contributed to the LSC62's successful symposium, organized by the International Institute of Space Law (IISL) and the European Centre for Space Law (ECSL), on the topic of the *legal aspects of dark and quiet skies*. In February the 61st session of the Science and Technical Subcommittee unanimously decided to add a single agenda item to their discussions called *Dark and quiet skies, astronomy, and large constellations: addressing emerging issues and challenges*. We look forward to assisting with any legal questions that may emerge in this regard.

Chair,

I thank you, chair.