

UNISPACE+50 Statement

Czech Republic

Madam Chair,

Please allow me first to congratulate you on your election as chair of the Committee. I am confident that under your chairship, the UNISPACE+50 conference will be a productive and successful event. I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Office of Outer Space Affairs for all its hard work in the preparation of this conference.

Madam Chair,

As we all know, the UNISPACE+50 conference is held on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first UNISPACE conference. The year 2018 also marks 50 years since the conclusion of the Rescue Agreement or 60 years since the first UN resolution establishing this very Committee, and is thus an excellent opportunity to reflect on the past decades of the outer space activities. The Czech Republic also celebrates anniversaries of important space events this year, namely 40 years since the spaceflight of our first cosmonaut, 40 years since the launch of our first satellite, and 10 years since our accession to the European Space Agency.

As we look back at these milestones, we reflect on the progress that we have made over those years and on new challenges, which have only recently emerged. Naturally, this reflection needs to be accompanied by a look towards the future. Although none of us can predict with certainty what the next 50 years of space activities will bring, we can attempt to set the direction towards a vision we all share. A vision of outer space that is safe and accessible to all, of space activities carried out for peaceful purposes, for the benefit of all mankind, and in a sustainable way, driving progress and innovation, and expanding our knowledge.

Madam Chair,

The Czech Republic has been deeply interested in the topic of Space Debris for many years and remains strongly focused on this issue. We note with concern the growing number of objects that threaten the safety and sustainability of orbital activities. At the same time, we greatly appreciate the efforts of the IADC and of COPUOS in developing Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, and the growing number of countries that include rules for space debris mitigation in their national legislations. In this context, we would like to invite all Member States of the United Nations to contribute to the Compendium of Space Debris Mitigation Standards, which was developed by Canada, Czech Republic and Germany and is maintained by the Office of Outer Space Affairs.

Looking ahead, on one hand we can see a risk of a significant increase of orbital debris due to the growing popularity and accessibility of small satellites, plans for satellite mega-constellations and other modern trends. On the other hand, technological progress also promises better mitigation options, improved tracking and conjunction assessments, and remediation methods through on-orbit activities. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to address a multitude of technical, legal and political issues, particularly in the areas of Space Traffic Management and Active Debris Removal, which are becoming more and more relevant due to technological advancements.

Madam Chair,

The Czech Republic supports the 7 thematic priorities, as well as the UNISPACE+50 resolution, starting the UNISPACE+50 process and providing a space-based impetus for an increased focus on sustainable development. We place a great importance on the social, economic and environmental benefits of space technologies and applications and we are firmly convinced that space activities can provide a major contribution towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In order to ensure that outer space activities can continue providing benefits on Earth, however, we also need to secure the long-term sustainability of these activities and of the outer space environment. We note with great appreciation the work on the Long-term Sustainability Guidelines by the dedicated working group and support continued work on this topic.

However, we should not forget that outer space activities continue to develop and evolve rapidly. To achieve sustainability in a truly long-term manner, we need to consider sustainable development and look towards the future to consider challenges and opportunities that await us in the coming years. The possibility of utilization of space resources represents both: an opportunity to help expand the scope and range of our activities in outer space and on celestial bodies, but also a challenge in reaching a consensus on an appropriate international legal regime.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The Czech Republic remains convinced that broad international cooperation on the global level, as well as on regional and bilateral basis, is key to realizing our shared vision for the future, and that COPUOS is a unique global platform to discuss and deal with these important issues. Space has famously been described as the final frontier. In pioneering this frontier, humankind has demonstrated some of the best examples of human curiosity, ingenuity, perseverance, courage and mutual cooperation. Let us all work together to preserve this noble tradition for generations to come.

Thank you, Madam Chair.