

Member State Statement - Australia

UNISPACE+50 High-level Segment, 61st Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Thank you Chair. On behalf of Australia, my congratulations on your election as Chair of this Committee.

My thanks also to Director Di Pippo and the work that has been put in by the Office for Outer Space Affairs for their preparation of UNISPACE+50.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, I am delighted to present Australia's Member State Statement at the UNISPACE+50 High-level Segment.

Australia has a long and enduring interest in the peaceful uses of outer space. Australia was one of the 18 nations to join the inaugural COPUOS in 1958. When the UN General Assembly established COPUOS as a permanent body in 1959, Australia was one of its 24 founding members. Over the years we have also had involvement in the subcommittees; notably, Australia continuously chaired the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee for over 30 years.

Australia is committed to our obligations consistent with the UN Space Treaties. We are a globally responsible citizen committed to international rules and norms for responsible behaviour in space, both now and into the future. We are one of sixteen countries that is a State party to all five space treaties.

On this 50th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful uses of Outer Space, I would like to provide an update on recent developments relating to the Australian Government's space agenda. This includes information regarding the recent announcement of the establishment of Australia's first-ever space agency.

Review into Australia's space industry capability

The Australian Government announced a review into Australia's space industry capability in July 2017.

The review was conducted by an Expert Reference Group chaired by Dr Megan Clark AC which handed its report to Government in March 2018. It found that:

- Australia's space industry already employs about 10,000 people and was worth \$(AUD)3.9 billion in the 2015–16 financial year;
- Australia has a vibrant community of active small and medium-sized enterprises and world-leading capability in research;
- Our stakeholders expressed a strong need for an Australian space agency.

Government response and establishment of the Australian Space Agency

The Government announced its response to the review on 14 May 2018. It supported in principle or noted the nine recommendations of the review.

The Government announced an investment of \$(AUD)300 million for space related activities. This included a \$(AUD)41 million investment in the Australian Space Agency, which comprises funding for the ongoing operation of the Agency, and \$(AUD)15 million from 2019-20 to support international investment.

The purpose of the agency is to transform and grow a globally respected Australian space industry that lifts the broader economy and inspires and improves the lives of Australians – underpinned by strong national and international engagement.

Building international partnerships to realise shared ambitions is central to the space agency's mission. In a sector undergoing rapid transformation and growth, it is vital that partnerships are inclusive, broad and deep. This is why the Agency will build relationships with governments, the private sector, academia and research institutes, nationally and internationally. It will provide one door and one voice for industry and overseas partners.

It will start operating on 1 July this year and its role will include:

1. leading Australia's international space engagement,
2. setting national policy and strategy for the civil space sector,
3. coordinating Australia's domestic space sector activities, and
4. supporting the growth of Australia's space industry.

Importantly, the Agency will share with all Australians our expanding role in space and its importance to the nation's economy, security, safety and living standards, as well as the impact space activities can have beyond space.

The Agency will have an important role to strengthen the connection that young people and their parents have with space – sparking their curiosity and expanding their knowledge and interest in space, science and technology.

As many of you know, the space sector is moving from the realm of governments to the commercial world, and we will be one of the world's most industry-focused space agencies. Our focus will be on building Australian space industry capability, in partnership with industry. Central to our success will be working with international partners on a foundation of trust and respect.

With regard to priorities, initial areas of focus for the Agency will include:

1. communications technologies, services and ground stations,
2. space situational awareness and debris monitoring,
3. positioning, navigation and timing infrastructure,
4. earth observation services,
5. research and development,
6. remote asset management, and
7. ‘leapfrog’ areas – or emerging areas in which Australia can nurture, step-up and lead.

Geoscience Australia projects

In addition to funding the Australian Space Agency, the Australian Government also announced \$(AUD)260 million for Geoscience Australia to deliver three projects. These three projects address two of the seven priorities I have just outlined (namely, PNT and Earth Observation services).

The three projects to be delivered by Geoscience Australia are:

- \$(AUD)161 million to deliver a Satellite-Based Augmentation System that will make positioning data accurate to 10cm available across Australia;
- \$(AUD)64 million for a National Positioning Infrastructure Capability to support positioning accuracies of 3cm in areas with mobile phone coverage;
- \$(AUD)37 million to extend Digital Earth Australia to give Australian industry greater access to reliable, standardised satellite imagery.

Through the Digital Earth Australia program, the government is ensuring we can benefit from Earth observation technologies to support our domestic response to the three key UN agendas: the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The technology and tools developed through this program are being shared. This is part of our contribution to global efforts, such as those led by the Group on Earth Observations. We recognise the support that many space faring nations have given to Australia through their investments in Earth observing satellites. We recognise the global benefits which could not have been achieved without open data sharing policies.

At the forthcoming High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals – to be held at the New York UN Headquarters in July, Geoscience Australia will also be highlighting the important role that Earth observation will play in the Sustainable Development agenda. We will shortly circulate invitations to a formal side event on this topic, to be hosted by Australia’s Minister for

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International Development and the Pacific. Australia looks forward to welcoming your delegates to this discussion.

The Space Activities Amendment (Launches and Returns) Bill 2018

The Space Activities Amendment (Launches and Returns) Bill 2018 was introduced into the Australian Parliament on 30 May 2018.

While the existing framework, as set out under the Space Activities Act 1998, has remained functional for nearly two decades, the operating environment continues to change. This includes both the type of activities being undertaken as well as the new participants involved, including smaller emerging businesses and additional involvement by universities.

Specifically, the Bill amends the Space Activities Act to address the changing landscape of the space industry. In particular, it broadens the current regulatory framework to include arrangements for launches from aircraft in flight and launches of high power rockets and reduces barriers to participation in the space industry by streamlining processes and insurance requirements for launches and returns.

Conclusion

As we look ahead, we understand the potential of the Space 2030 agenda, which combines global governance of outer space activities, space science, technology, policy and law. We look forward to contributing to this agenda.

To conclude, cooperation and dialogue were foundation principles of COPUOS in 1958. Sixty years on they remain central to our common interest in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Australia is working hard to build a space agency we can be proud of, which further secures our place as both a reliable partner in space and a globally responsible citizen.

Thank you.