

Statement by ESA at the UNISPACE+50 High-Level Segment

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Vienna International Centre

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Madame Chair, thank you very much for letting me take the floor. On behalf of the Director General of the European Space Agency, Mr Jan Wörner, I am honoured to address this assembly.

First of all, let me take this opportunity, Madame Chair, to congratulate you on your election. I am convinced that under your guidance the work of the Committee will be further advanced, and in this regard I would like to thank warmly your predecessor, Mr Dave Kendall, for his skilled chairmanship of UNCOPUOS over the last two years.

Today, we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The European Space Agency wishes to express its appreciation to the collective work carried out in this context, with a view to making space benefits available to all Nations.

Madame Chair, in **1972, ESA's predecessor organisation was the second observer to join in UNCOPUOS**. Since then the world of space research, of space technology, the degree of daily utilisation of space-based infrastructure and the number of nations active in space have significantly increased. Over the last fifty years, 87 nations and many observers and partnering organisations were integrated into a constructive dialogue on space affairs that affect all nations. UNCOPUOS remains a unique and valued forum to further develop initiatives and reach international consensus on space issues that concern all nations.

The European Space Agency fully acknowledges the collaborative success of UNCOPUOS in enhancing the long-term safety, security and sustainability of the space environment, **in particular the finalisation of the LTS guidelines, which represents a key contribution to the international community. The adoption of these guidelines is now strongly encouraged.**

The Director General of ESA provides, at the ESA Member States request, **coordination support for the preparation of UNCOPUOS meetings and supply technical expertise to Member States to enlarge the reach of their action in the UN context.** These actions are valued since ESA is managing, thanks to ESA Member States' investments, a large programmatic portfolio that addresses the full spectrum of space activities.

Today and after more than 50 years of Member States investments, ESA delivers a wealth of programmatic experience and a unique record of mission success in space. Thanks to ESA programmes and activities, Europe's citizens enjoy direct benefits, from jobs and economic growth, to public services, efficient communications and security. **In awarding more than 50.000 contracts, ESA was also very successful in building a competitive industrial capacity in Europe.** The Agency became a true peer among global players and a reliable partner in bilateral or multilateral undertakings. In the four decades since 1975, **over 500 international agreements have been concluded by the Agency, making possible more than 100 European missions since the launch of the first ESRO satellite on 29 May 1967,** and fostering solidarity amongst space nations. These programmatic highlights have been noticed in the international community, ranging:

- from ESRO 2B in 1968 to study cosmic rays and solar X-rays, to ROSETTA deploying the first ever landing probe on a comet in 2014 or the two ExoMars missions to explore Mars in cooperation with Roscosmos,

- from SPACELAB to the European contribution to the ISS with COLUMBUS a multipurpose science and technology laboratory. ESA has had more than 20 European astronauts working and conducting research in microgravity onboard the ISS. ESA is now about to deliver the first Service Module for the NASA Orion crew vehicle to go beyond Low Earth Orbit,

- from the first ARIANE launch from the Guiana Space Centre in 1979 until current operations of Ariane 5, Soyuz and Vega and soon Ariane 6 and Vega-C. ESA has launched more than 500 satellites and probes, securing access to space for European governments and successfully meeting the demand of the worldwide commercial market.

“Look ahead – look to the future.” With these words, Director General Jan Wörner sets the tone for 2018 and beyond that will see major new milestones. In July, a launch of **4 new satellites for the European Union will complete the deployment of the Galileo constellation.** The successful launch and operation of the **first seven Sentinel missions for Copernicus** delivering a wealth of

critical data about our home planet Earth, its climate and changing environment is seen as a major milestone. The joint ground-breaking **BepiColombo** scientific mission with JAXA to be launched to planet Mercury in October will also be a highlight for this year. Finally, ESA will launch **Aeolus** in August, a new Earth science mission – the first mission ever to acquire wind profiles on a global scale.

Today, Madame Chair, space infrastructure and space applications make crucial contributions to economic and social development, and support the evaluation and protection of our environment. ESA, together with its 22 Member States, its cooperating States and international partners, has been engaged in the 2030 agenda on sustainable development with the main objective to assess, showcase, facilitate and promote the uptake of Earth observation in SDG monitoring and reporting.

This has been a long-term commitment. It is recalled that **ESA and CNES together with the Canadian Space Agency initiated the International Charter for Space and Major Disasters at UNISPACE III in 1999**. Today this Charter includes 17 space agencies that provide in-kind data from their Earth observation missions and critical information to address natural or human-made disasters. The Charter has been activated more than 573 times in the last 19 years. Since then it has been recognised as a powerful instrument for mitigating the effects of disasters on human life and property and to support national disaster-management authorities.

The European Space Agency is committed and engaged in many collaborative frameworks: ESA takes an active part to the GEO Initiative on SDGs (EO4SDG). ESA co-leads the CEOS Ad-Hoc Team on SDGs and is a member of the Working Group on Geospatial Information. ESA builds on established relationships with UN agencies that are custodians of SDG indicators such as UN Environment, FAO, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank Group, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), etc. Through its Earth observation application programmes and projects, ESA develops best practices for SDG monitoring and reporting, and contributes to the production of global datasets which serve SDG data needs.

Madame Chair, long-term sustainability of outer space activities is critical for all space actors. In this context, the work of UNCOPUOS is essential in producing critical guidelines and in fostering a related international framework. The

Director General is currently actively seeking international consultations and generating a proposal for the ESA Member States' consideration at the next ESA Council meeting at ministerial level to be held in 2019. This programme proposal will focus, among others, on a space safety, addressing a wide-range of future activities related to space surveillance and tracking, space debris mitigation, space weather and tracking Near Earth Objects. This proposal is meant to provide a positive contribution to the long-term sustainability of space agenda.

ESA will continue over the next decades to stand as mechanism and actor of regional cooperation, peaceful uses of outer space, international cooperation and sustainable development for the benefit of humankind.

One of the UNCOPUOS greatest achievement over the past decades has been the development of international **space law, through the five international treaties concluded and the five sets of principles on space-related activities. ESA's commitment to promote this rule of law is central to the way in which the Agency conducts space activities and cooperates internationally.** Recognised as "An appropriate forum for Member States to exchange and coordinate positions on international space law", ESA also provides support to its Member States in the establishment and implementation of national space legislation.

Madame Chair, together with our Member States, the European space Agency is committed to support further the UNCOPUOS and the international space community in their wish to make space sustainable and beneficial to all.

Thank you very much.