



**STATEMENT BY REV. BR. GUY JOSEPH CONSOLMAGNO, S.J.
HEAD OF THE HOLY SEE'S DELEGATION
AT THE UNISPACE+50 HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE 61ST SESSION OF COPUOS**

Vienna, 21 June 2018

Madam Chair,

The Holy See is pleased to participate at this UNISPACE+50 high-level segment of the sixty-first session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). My Delegation would also like to congratulate you, Mme Chair, and the members of the Bureau of the Committee on your elections, and to thank both the Bureau and the United Nations Office on Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) for planning and organizing this important event.

50 years of UNISPACE and of “Earthrise”

The 50th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space provides the international community with a unique opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the three UNISPACE conferences (1968, 1982, 1999), to give renewed thought to the future of international cooperation regarding the peaceful uses of outer space, to consider the truly remarkable advances in space activities during this half-century, and to look towards the future.

This common reflection and consideration should be based on a two-fold recognition. First, that the fundamental idea behind COPUOS and UNOOSA – that the potential for development through space technology is immense and that the best way to make use of this potential is through international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space, facilitated by the United Nations – remains as true today as it was in 1968. And second, that the phenomenal growth of space activities since 1968, undertaken by a great number of both governmental and non-governmental entities, requires truly common thinking and efforts.

My Delegation is also conscious of the legacy of another 50th anniversary that we will celebrate later this year: fifty years have passed since US astronaut Bill Anders took the iconic photo “Earthrise” from aboard Apollo 8 as it orbited the moon. For the first time, humanity was faced with the image of planet Earth in the totality of space and as a whole that unites every man and woman, every nation and people. This simple image reminds the international community even today that our

common home requires our care and protection, as it remains our only home and that harm caused to it, is harm caused to us all, and our future.¹

As Pope Francis pointed out to the astronauts on board the International Space Station during their conversation in October last year, the vastness of space has a way of bluntly inviting us to consider where we are going and mankind's place in creation.²

Holy See – UNOOSA preparatory seminar

These more fundamental ideas served as the basis for a preparatory UNISPACE+50 Seminar on the *Exploration and Development of Space Opportunities and Issues in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals*, jointly organised by the Holy See and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs at the Vatican Observatory on 27-28 March 2018. The seminar was attended by 30 participants from nine countries. The participants considered four themes: “Space, Climate Change and Disaster Management”, “Space and the Sustainable Development Goals”, “Space and Humanitarian Aid”, and “Space as a Tool for Diplomacy and Peace”.

On **Space Diplomacy**, the Seminar recognized that, when the Earth is viewed from space, the atmosphere is the only border that matters, and that in seeing the Earth from space, we realize that our own borders are insignificant in comparison. The Earth's atmosphere is a global environment that needs to be protected by a global vision of this limited, shared natural resource and must be utilized for the benefit of all humankind.

Regarding **Space Accessibility**, this includes not just accessibility to the outer space environment for conducting research; space-derived data (both current and archival) should be made as widely accessible as possible to maximise the application of those data to address pressing humanitarian and environmental challenges.

The discussions at the Seminar regarding **Space and Society** reflected on the importance of communicating the societal benefits of space activities to the public and the need to expose people to its accomplishments in ways that everyone can understand, as well as greater transparency by countries in the sharing of data, policies and motivations for space research.

On the **Space Economy** and its link to the Sustainable Development Agenda, we need to reflect on how we can transform the space economy from one of very expensive space services and products available to a few, to one that harnesses the abundance of space-derived data and services for the good of all, creating opportunities to engage more actors and opening up new markets for space-derived data and services to meet the needs of the poor in a financially sustainable way.

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, 13.

² Dialogue of His Holiness Pope Francis with the Crew of the International Space Station, 26 October 2017.

Peaceful use of outer space – our guiding principle

The Space Treaty opens with two crucial paragraphs, in which the Member States acknowledge that they are “*Inspired* by the great prospects opening up before mankind as a result of man's entry into outer space” and that “*Recognizing* the common interest of all mankind in the progress of the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes”³ is critical. Fully in line with these principles, the Holy See wishes to stress the importance of ensuring that outer space remains peaceful and that all outer space activities and efforts protect and promote this goal. It would be a most dangerous and alarming development, and one that could impact every single man and woman on Earth, if outer space were to become another theatre of armed conflict, just as the land, sea and air before it. All nations share a common border with outer space, so all nations would be equally near such an area of conflict. Conflict in space would inevitably escalate tensions on Earth, and the effects of armed conflict in space would affect all present in outer space, whether they are combatants or not. The Holy See therefore, implores all States to maintain the peaceful uses of outer space – for the good of all and our one common home.

In closing, the Holy See reiterates its support for this high-level segment, the continued work of COPUOS and UNOOSA, as well as extending its gratitude to all participants at the 61st Session of the Committee and pledging its active engagement with these deliberations.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

³ Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, 1967.