

Statement by Germany

Agenda item 12 – General exchange of views on the legal aspects of space traffic management

Honorable Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

According to UNOOSA's online index, in 2020 1.263 objects were launched into outer space – yet a new record number. In order to safeguard the unimpeded access to outer space and its free use by everyone, there is a need for an international space traffic management – understood as a coherent set of technical and regulatory provisions assuring safe access into outer space, safe operations in outer space as well as safe return from outer space to Earth. Efficient and functional Space Traffic Management is relevant for everyone because it contributes to the protection of operational space systems and ensures the viability of private and public investments in space.

With STM, the international community can:

- make efficient use of the different orbital regions as limited natural resources,
- promote international standards for safe space activities,
- provide for efficient communication channels and collision avoidance procedures,
- and consequently limit the number of space debris and enhance the long-term sustainable use of outer space.

Germany is convinced that effective and sustainable space traffic management will serve the international community as a whole – and can only be achieved on the basis of multilateral consensus and international cooperation.

In order to implement Space Traffic Management, international regulation is needed on different levels, ranging from the development of technical and operational standards over norms of responsible behaviour in outer space, to the long-term objective of establishing a dedicated unitary international space traffic management regime.

At COPUOS, first building blocks have already been agreed in the context of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's work on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. As the development of new technologies brings great opportunities, it also creates unintended consequences and challenges. This is for example also illustrated by the Dark & Quiet Skies Initiative of the IAU, highlighting negative effects on astronomical research which need to be considered. We remain confident that further guidance will derive from the new LTS Working Group.

We are aware, that mutual transparency and confidence building through constant dialogue and collaboration are a prerequisite to international space traffic management. In Europe, we are gathering experiences in this area since 2015 with the European Space Surveillance and Tracking Support Framework. EU SST operates a growing sensor network and provides operational services such as collision avoidance for more than 200 satellites. Its unique governance model allows the participating states to continue to own, control and operate their national sensors. Data from the network is shared between the partners through a dedicated platform. EU SST services for collision avoidance, fragmentation analysis and reentry analysis contribute to a safe and sustainable use of space and will be available for free to users beyond Europe under the new European Union Space Programme.

We look forward to sharing our experiences and lessons learnt from this cooperation with the international community.

Honorable Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

With increasing space traffic we have no choice but to continue to discuss and find common solutions also to the regulatory and policy dimension of international space traffic management. Therefore, Germany is actively involved in bringing forward the topic of space traffic management both at the European as well as the international level and we look forward to continuing the dialogue on the legal aspects of STM under this single issue agenda item.

Thank you for your kind attention.

