

UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Legal Subcommittee Sixtieth Session

Vienna, 31 May - 11 June 2021

Statement of the Delegation of Romania

Agenda item 3: General exchange of views

Distinguished delegates,

Madam chairperson Setsuko Aoki (dear Setsuko), let me express on behalf of the Delegation of Romania our satisfaction for seeing you in the main chair of this Subcommittee and to transmit to you the support of my delegation for a successful accomplishment of your mandate.

We would also express our appreciation to the staff of the secretariat, in particular in those challenging circumstances, to the director of the Office, Simonetta Di Pippo, for her role in the achievements of the Subcommittee.

My delegation aligns with the statement of the European Union.

Madame Chairperson, my country supported the development of the Space2030 Agenda within the United Nations system and we could see its development as a necessity due to the major contributions of space to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. I hope that this successful Space2030 Agenda might, inter alia, create a framework for taking into account the planned substantial activities of countries and space agencies.

Romania as a European Union (EU) country and a European Space Agency (ESA) member state is participating to their programmes and applications. Romania is also a country having its own space agency - ROSA - and is developing its own space programme according to the national strategy and in concordance and complementarity with other international programs.

Madame Chair,

My country is convinced that a legally clear environment for space activities is needed for future space developments. And I will mention that the opinion of each country might contribute to this frame due to the global effects of any space undertaking.

I am pleased to report that (Item 7) Romania is preparing a national law for space activities, to be in concordance with the UN Legal Principles and with

the specific rules of the European Union and the European Space Agency. This legal frame will include also specific issues related to space traffic management, launch activities and critical space infrastructures. The internal process is advanced and it will be completed soon.

(Item 9) - The activities of COPUOS and its subcommittees are important for Romania. Regarding the future role of the Committee, as my delegations mentioned in most of its statements, the role of the Committee should be compliant with the global space developments in all areas including security. The Committee should regain its adequate role in a world where space became a distinct and solid area of human activity.

Regarding the methods of work, they should provide flexibility to adapt to the fast developing technical, political and commercial aspects of outer space activities, but also the resilience against external factors impeding its activities, as the current pandemics. We suggest the consideration of developing inter-sessional substantial activities, with the possible support of the member states represented in the Bureau.

Regarding space debris mitigation and remediation measures (item 10), we appreciate the guidelines established by the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space working group and support the continuation of the activity of the group. In particular, we suggest that the subcommittee should take into consideration the new developments in active debris removal which can be space-based and ground based, and therefore having different legal frames.

Regarding Space Traffic Management (item 12), the fast increase of the number and mass of satellites which are utilized mostly for commercial purposes is suggesting the need to move the specific weight of monitoring costs from governments to the commercial entities involved. Moreover, the accuracy of this monitoring set should be increased due to the number of objects on each orbit category and also the the mass of the object and the re-entry regime should be considered. It is obvious that those operations might quickly become a service to be provided on a commercial basis and specific international regulations should be established.

Connected to the area of Space Traffic Management we can see the concept of the criticality of space infrastructures. It is proved that the malfunctioning of space infrastructures supporting e.g., telecommunications, positioning, navigation, timing, Earth observation can produce important societal and economic damages. Some countries, as Romania, included space systems in the legal frames of critical infrastructures.

Regarding Space Resources (item 14), my delegation is supporting the establishment of a dedicated working group and we appreciate the work of Andrej Misztal and Steven Freeland in support of informal consultations, also the working paper by Luxemburg and Netherlands in the topics.

The access to space resources is not a new topic, being a component of space exploration missions since half a century and successful sample-return missions created the material basis. The In Situ Resources Utilization (ISRU) methods for planetary exploration are fundamental for new missions. This experience should, in our opinion, lead the further actions and the considerations of organizations as the International Space Exploration Coordination Group (ISECG) might be taken into account. We think that in this initial stage some principles should be taken into account, as: the legal implications of intervention on the mass and orbit of an outer space body, planetary protection rules which should be observed, but an important issue should be the need to access a specific resource, which cannot be obtained by other terrestrial means.

My country is participating to the Artemis program as an ESA Member State and also involved in the Mars Sample-return mission. The Romanian Space Agency is a member of ISECG.

We can mention the role of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) in developing scientific and legal studies and study groups on topics connected with the agenda, as Space Traffic Management, Space Critical Infrastructures, Space Resources. We support other non-governmental initiatives coming from COPUOS observers as the Moon Village Association in creating societal awareness and involvement at global level, supportive for the present rapid developments of the space endeavor.

Thank you, distinguished delegates, for your attention.