



European Union

**Statement on the occasion of the fifty-seventh session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**

**Vienna, 3 – 14 February 2020**

Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey<sup>§</sup>, Republic of North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Serbia\*, Albania\*, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, Ukraine, Norway<sup>+</sup>, Georgia, Armenia and the Republic of Moldova.

Before commenting on the issues related to the COPUOS agenda, let me start by outlining the current status of the EU activities in the space area.

The European Union, its Member States and the European Space Agency together have developed strong and unique space capacities and industry in Europe. The EU has a large budget for space, most of which is dedicated to the European Global Navigation Satellite systems, Galileo and EGNOS, and the European Earth-observation system, Copernicus.

Galileo is a global navigation system; it is autonomous, but also interoperable with existing satellite navigation systems. When Galileo is fully operational, it will allow improved services and provide new business opportunities in a wide variety of applications in many sectors of the economy worldwide.

Galileo also provides the Search and Rescue (SAR) operations for locating and helping people in distress. Launched as part of the Galileo Initial Services, Galileo is the first Global Navigation Satellite System offering the global Search and Rescue (SAR) capability. The service will be available at sea, in the mountains, across the desert and in the air inside the SAR/Galileo Service Coverage area. This essential Galileo service helps operators respond to a distress signal faster and more efficiently. The SAR/Galileo service is Europe's contribution to the upgrade of COSPAS-SARSAT, an international satellite-based SAR distress alert detection and information distribution system.

The EU is a member of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG), which promotes voluntary cooperation on matters of mutual interest related to civil satellite-based positioning, navigation, timing, and value-added services. The United Nations Office for Outer

<sup>§</sup> Candidate country

\* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Norway is a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

Space Affairs, UNOOSA, serves as the secretariat of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems and we would like to express our gratitude to the UNOOSA for its work.

Copernicus is a user-driven European Earth observation and monitoring programme. It offers information services based on satellite Earth Observation, in situ non-space data, and data and information processing. The information provided by the Copernicus services can be used by end users for a wide range of applications in a variety of areas. These include urban area management, climate monitoring, sustainable development and nature protection, regional and local planning, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, health, civil protection, infrastructure, transport and mobility, as well as tourism. The information services provided are freely and openly accessible to its users.

Since 2016, the EU through the Space Surveillance and Tracking, SST, Consortium is providing 24/7 services on Collision avoidance, Re-entry and Fragmentation to European users. These services contribute to ensure safety and sustainability in space. Today 131 spacecraft of the European Union and its member states - civil, military and commercial - are protected from risk of collision in all orbit regimes.

Chair,

The EU is about to adopt a Space Programme to boost the EU space capabilities in the fields of navigation, Earth-observation, space situational awareness and governmental satellite communication.

The EU Space Programme also addresses global challenges, such as fighting climate change, a transition to a low-carbon economy, smart mobility and digital economy. It will support a European 'New Space' approach with innovative start-ups, increased European technological autonomy as well as the EU procurement and aggregation of reliable and cost-effective European launch solutions.

Chair,

The EU and its Member States continue to promote the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. We continue to stress the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures and the need to advocate responsible behaviour in outer space in the framework of the United Nations.

We strongly support the multilateralism, multilateral approach and the United Nations. We stress that COPUOS and its Subcommittees are unique international platforms for international cooperation in space, including on the development of international norms and standards regulating space activities. We also recognize UNOOSA's important role in supporting the work of COPUOS and its subcommittees.

The EU and its Member States underline that the space treaties developed in the UN framework constitute the cornerstone of the global governance of outer space.

We underline the need to foster increased international cooperation, and to establish principles of responsible behaviour, and sustainability of space activities. Furthermore, we stress the need to strengthen commitments to avoid potentially harmful interference with the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, to facilitate equitable access to outer space.

We believe it is important to develop initiatives that will increase confidence and mutual trust. While a legally-binding instrument could be considered as a possible option, we believe that the most realistic near term prospect lies in agreeing on a voluntary instrument or voluntary norms to establish standards of responsible behaviour across the full range of space activities.

Such a voluntary instrument could include a political commitment by States and create a more structured cooperative framework. The compliance with existing international law would have to be ensured.

Chair,

We express our satisfaction that COPUOS and consequently UN General Assembly adopted the preamble and 21 Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. The adoption of the guidelines is a major achievement and a culmination of several years of work by COPUOS, which proved that multilateral space diplomacy can work and produces results.

We also express our satisfaction with the fact that COPUOS decided to establish a 5 year Working Group under the agenda item "the LTS of outer space activities" of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee. This is another positive step in terms of considering new guidelines, sharing experience, practices and lessons learnt from implementation of adopted guidelines, and raising awareness and capacity-building.

We believe that the Committee will form an effective bureau of the Working Group and that the Working Group will start its work as soon as possible.

---