



European Union

Statement on the occasion of the fifty-eighth session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee of the United Nations Committee of the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (Vienna, 19–30 April 2021)

Madam Chair,

1. 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[§], the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland⁺, Norway⁺, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia.
2. The European Union and its Member States regret that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and despite the proactive approach of the Secretariat of COPUOS and its Subcommittees in looking for viable solutions to hold the intergovernmental process, it was not possible to hold the COPUOS and the Legal Subcommittee sessions in the second half of 2020.
3. The EU and its Member States strongly 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 stress the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures and the need to ensure responsible behaviour in outer space in the framework of the United Nations.
4. As a firm believer in multilateralism with strong United Nations at its core, the EU supports COPUOS and its Subcommittees as unique platforms for international cooperation in space, including for development of international guidelines, best practices, transparency and confidence building measures. We also recognize the important role of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs in supporting their work.

[§] 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.

+ Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

5. 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 and that compliance with existing international law must be ensured.
6. We reaffirm the need to foster 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. It is important to develop initiatives that will alleviate tensions and increase confidence and mutual trust.
7. We reaffirm our strong satisfaction that COPUOS, and consequently the UN General Assembly, adopted the preamble and the 21 Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities (LTS). It is important that UN Member States pursue and intensify their efforts to address challenges in outer space, by starting the concrete implementation of the 21 Guidelines. Through these actions, we demonstrate our willingness and constructive approach to cooperate in order to preserve peace, safety, security and sustainability of outer space.
8. The EU and its Member States also express their satisfaction that COPUOS established a 5 year Working Group on the LTS. This is another positive step in terms of sharing experience, good practices and lessons learnt from implementation of the adopted guidelines, raising awareness and exploring opportunities for further capacity-building, and addressing new challenges for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, such as large constellations.
9. While we note with regret that no consensus was reached on the composition of the Bureau of the Working Group, during the last session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, we are confident that the process will be concluded during this session and that the Working Group can finally define its terms of reference, methods of work and work plan, in accordance with its mandate.

Madam Chair,

10. In these challenging times, the EU and its Member States, through different actions, have demonstrated how the space sector contributes to crisis management and that space assets are important to stimulate the economic recovery and to evaluate and implement public policies. Already, the EU space programmes, as Galileo and Copernicus, along with the national programs developed by the EU Member States, have been instrumental in addressing some of the challenges of the global COVID crisis. They have been fully mobilised to develop a series of initiatives, notably to mitigate the impact of the crisis and provide support to public authorities¹.
11. At the EU level, the precise and reliable positioning capabilities from EGNOS and Galileo were used to develop various applications in support of contact tracing initiatives of sanitary authorities. The programmes were also used to provide real-time crowd-sourced location data in support of fluid border crossing and intermodal connectivity and to reduce the risk of overcrowding in public spaces.
12. The European Commission and the European Space Agency have jointly developed the Rapid Action Coronavirus Earth observation dashboard, also known as RACE. The RACE platform provides access to key environmental, economic and social indicators to measure the impact of the coronavirus lockdown and monitor post-lockdown recovery for policy makers, including information from the Copernicus services.
13. Thanks to its nearly completely deployed constellation, Galileo already offers an excellent positioning service on a global basis. In the next two to three years, new innovative services will enter into service to provide decimetre level accuracy and authenticated solutions required to support emerging applications in the domain of drones, automated driving or Internet of Things. We will also offer improved Search and Rescue capabilities, as well as a unique new channel to relay emergency warnings from civil protection authorities.
14. The EU will soon adopt a new Space Programme for 2021 – 2027 to boost the EU space capabilities in the fields of navigation, Earth-observation, space situational awareness and governmental satellite communication, as well as enhancing the safety and security of the EU and its Member States. Besides governmental satellite communication and

¹ www.euspace-programme.eu/coronavirus.

abovementioned navigation, Earth-observation will be strengthened due to its key role in supporting cross-cutting initiatives, and Space Situational Awareness will receive a fair recognition in its crucial role in long-term space sustainability. In addition, the Space Programme will address global challenges, such as climate change, the transition to a low-carbon economy, smart mobility and digital economy, and will support a European 'New Space' approach with innovative start-ups, increased technological autonomy, as well as procurement and aggregation of reliable and cost-effective launch solutions.

Thank you for your attention.
