

Statement by SMPAG Chair to STSC 58th session

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Subcommittee.

As the Chair of the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG), I'm pleased to inform you about the progress of our work since the last session of this Subcommittee. Since then, SMPAG held two meetings in a virtual format, the 15th meeting on 24 September 2020 and the 16th meeting on 24-25 March 2021, ahead of this session of this Subcommittee. SMPAG is Chaired by the European Space Agency (elected to chair the Group by 2022) and supported by the Office for Outer Space Affairs as the secretariat to SMPAG.

The 15th SMPAG meeting was also addressed by UNOOSA Director, Simonetta Di Pippo, in the lead up to UNOOSA hosting the 7th IAA Planetary Defense Conference, which will take place next week, from 26 to 30 April 2021, in conjunction with this session of STSC.

Although initially planned as an on-site conference here at the Vienna International Centre, the Conference will be held in a virtual format and as I'm informed, UNOOSA as the host of 2021 PDC, will share an Information circular with links for member States and observers to join the Conference – in particular for some of the highlights, like on Day 1, discussions on an hypothetical asteroid impact scenario, on Day 2 legal considerations relevant for planetary defence and on Day 3 disaster management discussions and a debate by Heads and representatives of space agencies. I look forward to your participation.

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

In the interest of time, I just wish to inform that SMPAG at its meetings held since my last reporting, exchanged information on on-going and planned activities of our members related to planetary defence, both from the technical and policy level and was briefed inter alia on the on-going sample return missions Hayabusa2, OSIRIS-REx, and on the DART and Hera missions intended, as the first missions ever, to test the viability and efficiency of a kinetic impactor as a NEO deflection technique. In addition, SMPAG agreed on a statement of support for small-class, high-velocity flyby missions to

small bodies for planetary defence. Detailed minutes of our meetings are available at smpag.net

SMPAG also considered to perform a SMPAG exercise, with the aim to test the Group's real-world capabilities to support planetary defence in case of a real threat. I would like to thank our colleagues from the Italian Space Agency ASI, in volunteering to organize a splinter meeting in a couple of months to evaluate this proposal, define time-lines for the exercise and identify contributing agencies. Furthermore, a conference room paper 10 by SMPAG has been made available on the report by the SMPAG Ad-Hoc Working Group on Legal Issues – a summary of its report on legal overview and assesment of questions related to planetary defence.

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

I would also like to encourage States members of the Committee to express interest in joining our work and becoming a SMPAG member. The SMPAG Terms of Reference are available at our webpage smpag.net. At present SMPAG has 19 members and 6 permanent observers. A letter addressed to the SMPAG Chair, with a copy to the Secretariat, is required to indicate your intention to join our work.

Finally, *Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,* I wish to inform you that this is my last time to address this Subcommittee as I decided to pass the role of Chairmanship of SMPAG to my ESA colleague and Acting Head of ESA's Planetary Defence Office, Detlef Koschny.

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates, it has been a pleasure working with this distinguished body and leading the SMPAG group. Thank you.