

Statement by Sweden, Agenda Item 5, General Exchange of Views
COPUOS Main Committee, 1-10 June 2022

Mr Chair,

Please allow me to welcome you as Chair of this COPUOS session and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to thank Acting Director Niklas Hedman and the Office for Outer Space Affairs for the excellent preparation of this session, despite the difficult circumstances.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement by the European Union. Please, allow me to add the following in a national capacity.

COPUOS and its Subcommittees are unique platforms for international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space, including the development of international space law, international norms and standards, guidelines, best practices, and other transparency and confidence building measures regulating space activities. COPUOS's important role for the peaceful, safe and sustainable use of outer space is also mentioned in "Our Common Agenda", the UN Secretary General's report from September last year, which we very much welcome and would like to see translated into action during the years to come.

However, this year's session takes place in a very difficult time with an ongoing war in Europe. Sweden condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's brutal and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, including the UN Charter. We are appalled by the enormous human suffering caused by the Russian Federation. Russia must cease its military operations immediately, and there must be accountability for the crimes committed during Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Sweden firmly supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity.

Sweden is a firm believer in multilateralism. Our new national space strategy, which was adopted in 2018, underlines the importance of international cooperation and defines space as a global common. Sweden remains committed to promoting the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis.

Sweden has been an actor in space for more than 50 years. We have an advanced space industry, cutting-edge research and the space centre, Esrange, with more than 600 successful launches of sounding rockets, in northern Sweden. The government is continuing to invest in the space sector. After having inaugurated a test bed facility in 2020 at the Esrange Space Center, where rocket engines and reusable space technology is developed and tested, a new launch pad will soon be finalized and operational, that will provide Sweden and Europe with capacity to launch small satellites into orbit from 2023. In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the technical presentation to be held later today in our current committee meeting by the Swedish Space Corporation, titled “Esrange – the Most Versatile Space Centre in the World. New services to enable a sustainable future”.

Mr Chair,

Outer space resources and the services that they provide are essential for many sectors in today’s society and for our global economy. Space services and technology are also drivers for socioeconomic development and crucial for tackling our common global challenges and implementing Agenda 2030. In this regard, Sweden welcomes the adoption of the Space2030 Agenda in our last meeting of this committee, delivering on the mandate received by the General Assembly. It is now important that all UN Member States take steps towards implementing the Space2030 Agenda. Sweden will certainly do its share.

Mr Chair,

In order to continue to reap these benefits from space, ensuring the long-term sustainability of space activities is of course a prerequisite. Our increasing use and reliance on space poses new challenges for the future, and COPUOS has a crucial role in tackling these. Sweden welcomes the progress made in the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space under the leadership of Mr. Umamaheswaran. We note with appreciation the agreement on the working group's terms of reference, methods of work and work plan in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee earlier this year. It is now key that the group can start its important work and address challenges in outer space including the concrete implementation of the adopted 21 Guidelines. Sweden looks forward to engaging constructively in this work.

Our national implementation of the guidelines is underway, and we appreciate the opportunities to learn from other countries' experience. A key element, and main point of focus for our national implementation, will be our national space legislation. A national inquiry proposed a modernized national space law in the end of last year, and this proposal has been shared with Swedish stakeholders for consultation during this spring, and the comments will be analysed with the aim to ultimately present a proposal for a new legislation to the parliament.

Sweden also welcomes the establishment of the new Working Group on Space Resources with Ambassador Misztal from Poland as Chair and Professor Freeland from Australia as Vice Chair, and the agreement on the working group's mandate, terms of reference, methods of work and work plan in the Legal Subcommittee earlier this year.

Sweden appreciates efforts by the UNOOSA and partners to highlight the role of women in space and the need to improve gender balance in the space sector. Ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in space is not only a question of fairness, it is also smart policy.

Mr. Chair,

To conclude, Sweden will continue to actively engage in multilateral cooperation on space issues, in COPUOS and elsewhere. We will continue to promote the sustainable, safe, secure and responsible use of outer space for peaceful purposes. We remain committed to work to prevent an arms race in outer space and to ensure that outer space does not become an arena for conflict. We will support efforts to enhance transparency and openness of the space environment and the sharing of information from space applications.

We look forward to working together with all delegations to ensure a fruitful session.

I thank you.