

*Sixty-eighth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space  
Vienna, (25 June – 2 July 2025)*

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Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. I'm honoured to congratulate the elected Bureau for the year 2025, Mr. Rafiq Akram of Morocco as elected Chair; Mr. Juan Francisco Facetti of Paraguay as Vice-Chair; and Ms. Hesa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, as Second Vice-Chair and Rapporteur.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Mr. Sherif Sedky of Egypt, Chair of the Committee for 2024, for his dedicated leadership and commendable efforts in guiding the work of this Committee. Allow me to also express my appreciation to Ms. Ulpia-Elena Botezatu of Romania and Mr. Santiago Ripol Carulla of Spain, as Chairs of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee respectively.

Deputy Director Driss El Hadani and I are now in our second cycle of COPUOS, and are pleased to see the number of initiatives spearheaded by this Committee, the growing interest of more Member States in joining the Committee, *and* the receptiveness of delegates to industry engagement during the various side events and initiatives that we have organised during this cycle.

The year 2025 has started on a challenging note for us in the secretariat, with the liquidity crisis critically affecting delivery of our mandates across the five pillars of UNOOSA's strategy. These are also challenging times for you, the Member States, as you work to uphold COPUOS' vital mandate under the constraints presented by a reduced Committee session. Now, more than ever, it is important to focus your limited time on urgent topics that can only be addressed through multilateral solutions.

Chair, distinguished delegates, last year was critical in publicly reaffirming the importance of the work and the mandate of COPUOS by Heads of State and Governments in New York. We *have* entered a new era of space exploration. One which is characterised by a rapid rise of national and in particular, *commercial* actors. The need for strong multilateral decision-making and the need for COPUOS to rise to the challenge, cannot be overstated.

Your deliberations on crucial issues – space resources, space traffic coordination, information sharing, space debris, and lunar governance are absolutely fundamental to real-world issues today and to the long-term sustainability of outer space.

Distinguished delegates, as you know, I have the utmost respect for the Member State-driven process that underpins this Committee. However, the time has come to speak with directness and urgency – for the sake of space safety and in order to preserve the authority and credibility of this Committee. Allow me to explain why.

This past weekend, UNOOSA was informed by the Malaysian space regulator of an urgent conjunction warning involving a Malaysian satellite and another satellite operated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), with a potential collision predicted within 24 hours. The Malaysian satellite was not capable of performing avoidance maneuvers. Upon receiving the request, UNOOSA promptly conveyed the information to the relevant State and, to help assess the situation, we also engaged flight dynamics experts from the Space Data Association and the space situational awareness provider Digantara. These partners assisted in verifying the data and advising on risk mitigation, demonstrating the extreme importance of international coordination in ensuring the safety and sustainability of space activities. They advised to alter the attitude of the satellite in order to minimise collision risk. Typically a satellite operator will move its satellite to avoid a collision when another object is around 5 kilometres away. In this case, the satellites were only 75 meters away. Thankfully the DPRK operator performed a manoeuvre and the risk was averted. I would like to thank the Malaysian space regulator for allowing me to share this information so transparently with you.

This is the second such instance in the past six months where UNOOSA has been approached to assist in the context of a predicted conjunction. On the previous occasion, a close approach of approximately 3 kilometers was anticipated between a United States satellite and one registered to China. At the time, there was uncertainty regarding the appropriate point of contact, and UNOOSA was able to facilitate constructive engagement with our Chinese counterparts, so as to avoid a collision. As more satellites are launched into low earth orbit, more conjunctions will occur. From the two examples given, I hope you can see that this is a very *real* concern. But, distinguished delegates, UNOOSA is not a hotline for Space Traffic Coordination. This is a responsibility that this Committee must assume. We urgently need an International Committee for Space Traffic Coordination. Therefore I would like to commend and thank the United Arab Emirates for their initiative in bringing forward a proposal for Space Traffic Coordination and encourage Member States to please consider this with the urgency and attention it demands.

Distinguished delegates, as urgent as space traffic coordination is today, and as late as we may be on several of these issues, we are not yet coordinating lunar activities, even though that need is already emerging. With these examples, I hope you feel encouraged to consider concrete outcomes for a potential UNISPACE IV conference.

UNOOSA is here to support you, the Member States, in these critical deliberations towards achieving tangible outcomes. We are committed to delivering on our key secretariat mandates – in supporting deliberations in this Committee and its subsidiary bodies; as executive secretariat to the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG) and to the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG), and in leading coordination of UN entities through UN-Space as well as supporting the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN) and the Space and Global Health Network. All of these platforms have continued to deliver results and drive international cooperation over the last year.

Allow me to provide you with some further highlights of the work of UNOOSA:

Following the first ever United Nations Space Bridge roundtable in New York last October, we organized the UN Space Sustainability Days, intended specifically for you, COPUOS delegates, here in the home of space diplomacy just ahead of the session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. Our goal was to enhance your knowledge and understanding of the practical realities associated with space traffic coordination and on-orbit

servicing, through simulation exercise that highlighted practical considerations that arise when debris is created and close encounters between space objects occur.

To advance on these important matters, UNOOSA is finalizing its Space Sustainability Program to support LTS guideline implementation, strengthen space traffic coordination around the world, explore regulatory and financial aspects of debris removal, and broaden stakeholder engagement.

In maintaining the UN Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space, we received 2,437 registrations in 2024, another record number. We convened the “*Second Meeting of National Focal Points on Registration*”, the inputs of which will contribute to developing a *Toolkit on Registration Practices* in Q3 2025 that can empower all nations to establish national registration frameworks. The Capacity-Building Workshop, jointly organised by UNOOSA and the ITU earlier this month looked at the life cycle of a satellite – from an ITU filing to registration with UNOOSA, which benefited both the Vienna and Geneva communities.

I would also like to inform you that the updated treaty booklet *International Space Law: United Nations Instruments* (ST/SPACE/61/Rev.3) is currently being prepared in all UN official languages. For over two decades, this series has served as a valuable reference for policymakers, legal experts, technical specialists, and scholars alike.

This work is part of our broader capacity-building efforts in international space law, offering a platform for the exchange of legal insights and best practices. Complementing this, the ASTRO database on the Office’s website hosts key documents on national space regulations and showcases the Office’s work on *travaux préparatoires* for UN space treaties. As an integral part of the Office’s mandate, capacity building on space law and policy is provided to Member States, particularly emerging space nations, through dedicated legal advisory missions, supporting the implementation of international space law at national level.

The Global Space Law Project of the Office plays a vital role in helping Member States—especially emerging space nations—develop and strengthen national space laws and policies. Our team has just returned from a mission to Ghana focused on treaty ratification and initial legal drafting. With over 60 requests received, the project delivers high-impact support but relies entirely on extrabudgetary resources.

UNOOSA’s other flagships—UN-SPIDER, Access to Space4All, Space4Water, Space4Women, and Space4Youth, continue to drive impactful results, from supporting the implementation of space law and policy, to democratizing access to space, ensuring education for all, to driving national resilience to natural disasters.

Earlier this month, at the United Nations Ocean Conference, we launched the Space4Ocean Alliance, leveraging the transformative power of space-based solutions to better understand, protect, and sustainably manage our ocean ecosystems. The Alliance provides an international platform for coordinated action, convening both the space and the marine and maritime communities. The Alliance now has 28 members, thanks to the Philippines Space Agency joining just yesterday.

Our UN-affiliated Regional Centres for Space Science and Technology Education continued to offer valuable STEM opportunities across the globe with meanwhile over 3,200 participants having completed various courses since the centres were established 3 decades ago.

The International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems established a new, 5th Working Group on Lunar Positioning, Navigation and Timing; vital work that will be closely coordinated with ATLAC.

The Space and Global Health Network agreed on its 2025–2035 strategy. As part of our Space4Global Health efforts, UNOOSA held the Regional Conference for the Americas to identify shared regional health needs. We also made strong progress on the interdisciplinary Curriculum on Space and Global Health and began defining key Space-based Health Variables to ensure long-term access to space data for global health.

The Space Mission Planning Advisory Group established a new Working Group on Apophis Flight Missions, as a mechanism to identify and coordinate planned missions, including commercial ventures, to asteroid Apophis during its historic close approach in spring 2029. 2029 is now designated as the International year of Asteroid Awareness and Planetary Defence, thanks to the recommendation of this Committee.

We contributed to the 2025 IAA Planetary Defense Conference, held in South Africa in May, addressing a hypothetical asteroid impact exercise and disaster preparedness and response. And in “Breaking News” we disseminated information to all Member States on a potential impact of asteroid “2024 YR4”, which in February 2025 exceeded the 1% impact probability threshold for 2032, pursuant to the work, which is coordinated by the International Asteroid Warning Network and the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group.

I invite you also to look at our 2024 Annual Report “*From Strategy to Action*”, which was launched just ahead of this session, for further highlights.

Chair, distinguished delegates, I hope this summary provides a clear overview of the breadth and scope of UNOOSA’s work. I say this with purpose, as we currently find ourselves in the midst of the UN reform process known as UN80, where the Secretary General is seeking efficiency and budgetary reform; reviewing mandates and intends structural changes to streamline operations. There is a real risk that the broader, cross-cutting relevance of UNOOSA’s work may not be fully recognized in New York-based decision-making processes. For example, UNOOSA may be viewed solely as the Secretariat to COPUOS, or our space applications work narrowly defined by our UN-SPIDER mandate. Such a perception—shaped by only the more visible aspects of UNOOSA’s work—risks leading to misguided conclusions, including the fragmentation of our Office or its merger with larger entities, which would limit the benefits available to Member States, especially developing countries. We sincerely hope we can count on your support in engaging your counterparts in New York to help preserve and strengthen UNOOSA’s role as the UN80 process unfolds.

Chair, distinguished delegates, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all our partners that support our activities. We hosted a fund-raising engagement meeting on 16 June and aim to proactively reach out to stakeholders further for support on our new *Space Cooperation for Development Fund*. This *Multi-Partner Trust Fund* (MPTF) will enable coordinated, cross-sectoral action across the UN system and with external partners, including governments, non-governmental as well as private sector actors – ensuring that space-based solutions are inclusive, impactful, and future-proof. The establishment of this Fund is an important milestone for us and coincides with the mid-term review of the Space2030 Agenda in 2025, where partnerships play an integral role. We invite you, Member States, to engage with us and help us grow the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, so that we can better support you. For

a more detailed presentation about the Fund and how you can get engaged, I invite you to join us on Monday, 30 June, from 9.00-9.50 am in the Press room.

Looking ahead, the 2025 Space Law Conference, taking place in a hybrid format from 19–20 November here in Vienna, will focus on the lifecycle of space debris and look at how States and operators are translating the space debris mitigation and long-term sustainability guidelines into national frameworks, and how emerging operations, such as active debris removal, on-orbit servicing, and satellite transfer give rise to interlinked legal challenges.

A day ahead of the Space Law Conference and following last year's successful conference on Sustainable Lunar Activities, we plan to hold a Lunar Industry Forum on "Commercial Lunar Landscape and Policy Needs". This will be an opportunity for commercial lunar operators to be informed about ATLAC's work plan and also raise awareness on their planned activities. We hope this will help Member States better understand the role of commercial companies and the current state of lunar missions *and* that it will help inform related policy discussions in ATLAC.

In December, from 9-11 here in Vienna, the UN/SKAO Workshop on Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society will highlight efforts by astronomers, satellite operators, and manufacturers to reduce satellite impact on astronomical observations. It will also address legal and regulatory aspects, bringing together experts, industry stakeholders, and the diplomatic community contributing to COPUOS discussions. These are just some highlights, and I invite you to follow our channels for information on the upcoming events.

Regarding UNISPACE IV, I wish to emphasize that we are presented with a window of opportunity. As you deliberate on this topic, I encourage you to consider UNISPACE IV not merely as an event, but as a milestone: to work towards and deliver mechanisms and solutions that the space community and the developing world urgently need. I hope future generations will look back on 2027 as we today look back on 1967, as the pivotal moment that provided the critical certainty required to secure more investment and unleash the potential of space for all Member States.

Chair, distinguished delegates, rest assured that UNOOSA is doing its very best in challenging circumstances. During this Committee's meeting, we will also have several very topical side-events:

This week, starting today on: 1) *International Cooperation and Coordination: Towards Sustainable Space Activities*, co-organized with Japan; on 2) *Unlocking Regional Potential through Earth Observation: A Workshop on the Earth Observation Initiative (EOI)*, co-organized with Singapore; on 3) *Celebrating African Space Development: Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Global Space Sector*, co-organized with Morocco; and on 4) *Space Traffic from a Constellation Perspective*, where for the first time, we will have satellite operators from the US, China, and the European Union discussing their priorities and needs.

Next week, on Monday morning, we invite you to join us for a 4) *Strategic Donor Briefing on the Space Cooperation for Development Fund* – where we will present on how you can engage and support us; followed by side-events on 5) *The imperative of ensuring space sustainability and a safe airspace*, co-organized with Austria and Canada; 6) *Of Economy, Ecosystems and Economics: Space as a Development Imperative and Catalyst of Growth*; and 7) *Towards Gender Equality in Space: Insights from the Second Phase of the UNOOSA-led Landmark Study*, co-organized with the Republic of Korea, where we will present key findings

from the second phase of study under our Space4Women project. Detailed list of all side-events is available on the COPUOS session webpage

As you prepare to begin deliberations for this sixty-eighth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, I would like to leave you with a sense of urgency to take bold action. The exponential growth in space activities and objects has dramatically increased the number of stakeholders and the critical need for ensuring space safety. This comes down to understanding what is happening in space and ensuring robust communication among all actors to safeguard the space environment. As we know, bilateral communication is not always possible or effective—*this* is precisely why the multilateral process within COPUOS takes on such central importance. If COPUOS is unable to deliver on its core priorities, there is a real risk that others—more agile and faster-moving—will step in to fill the gap. It is in our collective interest to prevent this and ensure that COPUOS remains the leading forum for space governance.

Chair, distinguished delegates, thank you for allowing me to take so much of your time. I would like to end on a high note showcasing how we are concretely supporting developing nations and small island developing states with digital twins, which demonstrate the power of space, artificial intelligence, and UNOOSA's innovative partnerships with companies like Space Data Inc from Japan. My thanks to her Excellency Ambassador Matilda Osei-Agyeman from Ghana for supporting us in the preparation of our recent agreement with the Commonwealth Secretariat to support the Commonwealth family of nations with such technologies.

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I wish you a productive, cooperative, and impactful session. Thank you for your attention.

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