



European Union

EU Statement on the occasion of the Sixtieth Session of the Legal Subcommittee United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

(Vienna, 31 May-11 June 2021)

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: the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland+, Norway+, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia.

Madam Chair,

2. Please allow me first, to welcome you as Chair of the Legal Subcommittee. I would also like to thank Director Di Pippo and the Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), for the excellent preparation of this session. The EU and its Member States remain committed to actively contributing to the work of Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its Subcommittees and express their full support for the recently submitted application of Slovenia to become a member of COPUOS. We would like to underline the role and the contributions of permanent observers to the work of the Committee, and we are glad that the European Union is amongst them, in accordance with the related UN General Assembly Resolutions of 2011 and 2018.

Madam Chair,

3. The EU and its Member States believe that space activities must take place within a multilateral rules-based system. We reiterate that COPUOS and its Subcommittees are unique platforms for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, including on the development of international norms and standards regulating space activities. We also recognize the important role of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs in supporting their work.

*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.

4. The EU and its Member States further believe that the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and other UN treaties on outer space constitute the cornerstone of international space law. This UN framework is complemented by other space relevant documents and resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly. Consequently, COPUOS and its Subcommittees are the main forum for an inclusive dialogue on space law, space governance and space policy issues. As a responsible space actor, the European Union is considering taking steps towards the acceptance of the rights and obligations contained in the relevant UN Treaties on Outer Space.

Madam Chair,

5. The EU and its Member States welcome the scheduled informal consultations under the agenda item 14 entitled “General exchange of views on potential legal models for activities in exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources” and hope that the Legal Subcommittee will reach consensus on the establishment of a new working group on this issue. Such a working group will be the appropriate next step to work on legal aspects related to space resources activities and to ensure that these are conducted in a safe, sustainable and peaceful manner and in accordance with international law.
6. 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, along with a strengthened commitment to avoid potentially harmful interference with the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. We reaffirm the need to foster international cooperation, sustainability of space activities and to facilitate equitable access to outer space, with the UN playing a leading role in this regard.
7. We stress that capacity building in space law and policy is of great importance for maintaining the rule of law with regard to space activities, especially with respect to new space actors and emerging space nations. We express our appreciation and support for UNOOSA’s capacity building activities in this regard.
8. The EU and its Member States welcome the agreement on the composition of the Bureau of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities reached at the 58th session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. We congratulate Mr. Umamaheswaran of India upon his election as Chair and we assure him of our support and cooperation. We appreciate the ultimate flexibility shown by Japan, Switzerland and the

UAE and we look forward to working with their nominees for addressing challenges in outer space, including by starting the concrete implementation of the 21 Guidelines.

Madam Chair,

9. In these challenging times, the European Union, through different actions, demonstrated the contribution of the space sector to the crisis management and the importance of space assets to stimulate economic recovery and to evaluate and implement public policies. Already, the EU space programme components, such as Galileo and Copernicus, have been instrumental in addressing some of the challenges of the COVID crisis hitting us globally. 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. Finally, they have also been used and contributed to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
10. The European Union has just adopted a 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.
11. Regarding space traffic management, with EU Space Surveillance and Tracking (EUSST) the EU and its Member States provide spacecraft collision avoidance, re-entry and fragmentation services by operating and developing Space Surveillance and Tracking capabilities. With the adoption of the Space Programme, further services are envisaged (space debris removal techniques and space debris mitigation), in order to support safe access and return from outer space and in-orbit operations.
12. We believe that space science, applications and technologies have a great potential to help us tackle major global challenges. In this respect, we express our satisfaction with the progress made by the Space2030 Agenda Working Group over the past two years. We encourage Member States to make every effort to finalize this process in 2021, including during this session of the Legal Subcommittee, thus enabling the Committee to deliver on the mandate received by the General Assembly and to demonstrate the continued effectiveness and relevance of its work.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ www.euspace-programme.eu/coronavirus.