



Ministry of Economic Affairs
and Employment of Finland

Finland's Statement in the 62nd session of the Legal Subcommittee of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 20 March – 31 March 2023

Agenda Item 7 – National Legislation Relevant to the Peaceful Exploration and Use of Outer Space

Thank you Madame Chair,

The importance of national space laws as elements of space governance has increased along with the increased number of actors, objects and activities in outer space. The role of national laws is further emphasised by their bridging role between international and domestic law, and between legal obligations and 'soft law' as non-legally binding international norms are also being 'incorporated' in national space legislation. Voluntary international cooperation and information exchange among States as national regulators enable better coordination of these relationships and their consequences, and ensures that space activities are carried out with certain degree of unity and coherence.

We believe that sharing best practices from implementing the international obligations promotes sustainability and safety of space activities as well as the development of international space law by elevating the knowledge base and coherence amongst the spacefaring States and those to come. Accordingly, we wish to congratulate the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs for their work in the Space Law for New Space Actors project, which offers United Nations (UN) Member States tailored capacity building to help them draft national space legislation.

Madame Chair,

Finland is a party to four of the UN Space Treaties. We became a space-faring nation in 2017 when the first Finnish satellite was launched. This, and other upstream space activities that were being planned by companies and scientific institutions, were the most important consideration as to why the Finnish Government needed to set up a legal framework – to be able to authorize and supervise the non-governmental space activities, in accordance with its international obligations.

The Finnish national space law, Act on Space Activities and the supplementing Decree, came into force in January 2018. The Act details the licensing process of space activities, sets up the national registry of space objects, and states the liability and insurance requirements, as well as the consequences for a breach of the law or a license. Under the Space Act, avoidance of unnecessary environmental harm and space debris is one of the conditions for authorization, which is further reinforced by a specific section on environmental protection.

Madame Chair,

Finland would like to inform the Legal Subcommittee on the developments of its space activities and relevant national legislation.

Today, there are 22 satellites in the Finnish registry of space objects, 15 of which are Earth observation satellites producing data that is provided commercially. The Act on Space Activities was amended for the first time in February 2023, when new regulations on satellite remote sensing entered into force. Thus, the current Space Act applies respectively to both launching and operating a space object as well as operating a remote sensing instrument onboard a space object if the capacity of the device used exceeds technical parameters concerning the accuracy and quality of the data produced.

The Space Act holds that remote-sensing operator must have a prior authorization for satellite remote sensing from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment that is also the licensing authority of Finnish space activities. Conditions for authorization include sufficient customer due diligence procedures for investigating to whom and to which purposes data is to be distributed. There is an explicit prohibition in the law that no data shall be disclosed for military use in a country subject to a European Union or United Nations arms embargo, or for any other use that is contrary to sanctions imposed by the European Union or United Nations.

The same prohibition can be found in a new Act on ground stations and certain radars that also entered into force in February 2023. According to this Act, a ground station or radar may be established, and ground station and radar activities conducted, only if the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency has granted prior permission for these activities. Such activities refer to sending data or signals to space infrastructure or receiving those therefrom using a ground station, or transmitting or receiving radio signals or laser pulses from or to space by means of a radar, as well as processing of such data or signals.

The new legislation on satellite remote sensing as well as on ground stations and certain radars also include provisions establishing supervision mechanisms to assure the operators are in compliance with the appropriate law and licenses granted. The new legislation aims at ensuring national and international security concerning distribution of satellite data and creating a predictable and legally clear operating environment to promote the growth of the sector.

Thank you Madame Chair and distinguished Delegates.