

**Statement Kingdom of the Netherlands Item 11 – General exchange of views on the legal aspects of space traffic management**

Mr Chair, I thank you for giving me the floor.

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates,

My Government would like to recall that issue of space traffic is closely connected to the notion of the freedom of exploration and use of outer space as defined in the Outer Space Treaty. The Outer Space Treaty, in particular through its principles on freedom, of due regard, and of cooperation and mutual assistance, clearly obliges us to coordinate and manage space traffic in such a manner that space remains safe and sustainable, and indeed accessible. Yet, the worrying lack of rules on the coordination of traffic in outer space, let alone its management, is a cause of concern. This Sub-Committee must dedicate its time and attention to this problem. It is for that reason that we have co-sponsored the German initiative to set up a study group under the present agenda item. We thank Germany for taking this initiative, and provide our full support. This effort is complementary to the work in the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee on space traffic coordination and management, in particular to the work on Space Situational Awareness, the Long Term Sustainability Guidelines, and Space Surveillance and Tracking. The scientific and technical aspects being addressed in the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee, the legal aspects being addressed in the Legal Sub-Committee, it should culminate in concrete steps in the Main Committee.

As the Conference Room Paper suggests, the study group will collect policies, best practices, and requirements. These should guide us to develop this further, and to consider how to adopt the most responsible behaviour, norms and rules in the context of space traffic in all its aspects. As outer space is the province of mankind, management and coordination of traffic in outer space is not the responsibility of a single country, but of all countries carrying out activities in outer space. It is for that reason that a coordinated, multilateral approach is required.

Mr Chair, we need to turn our minds to this topic. The modern world could not function without air traffic control, and everything related to that. Aircraft would crash into each other, and many, many, lives would be lost. My delegation fails to see why the same should not apply to outer space. A lack of coordination and management of space traffic not only endangers the freedoms in outer space of future generations, but as we, on earth, are increasingly dependent on space technologies, it is only a matter of time before incidents in outer space as result of a lack of space traffic coordination threaten lives on earth.

Kingdom of the Netherlands – Check against delivery

I thank you for your attention.