

Sixty-fourth session of the Legal Subcommittee  
of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space  
Vienna, (5-16 May 2025)

**STATEMENT BY THE  
DIRECTOR  
UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR OUTER SPACE AFFAIRS (UNOOSA)**

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to welcome you all to this session of the Legal Subcommittee. Deputy Director, Driss El Hadani, and I are now in our second cycle of COPUOS, and I can confidently say that we are impressed by the initiatives within COPUOS to deliver on the priorities of the space sector.

The Outer Space Treaty and the subsequent treaties, principles, guidelines, and resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly have played a vital role in enabling the last six decades of space activities. Now, your deliberations on critical issues such as space resources, space traffic, space debris, lunar consultations, and UNISPACE IV can play an equally vital role in enabling the safe continuation and sustainable development of space activities for the decades to come. This is why the space sector at large looks to COPUOS for critical guidance and is watching to see if COPUOS can indeed deliver multilateral solutions to address current needs and priorities.

Excellencies, most of you know me by now. I have worked hard to fulfill and defend the mandate of COPUOS since the first day of my appointment one and a half years ago. Because I have every respect for you and for this body, I will always be open and frank with you. We *must not* lose precious time focusing on procedures and formalities over substance and solutions. UNOOSA, and your discussions on Space, are reaching a watershed moment. Space activities are presenting us with urgent realities and our task is to ensure that we rise to the occasion and deliver on the needs of the day. I am committed to this but I am increasingly concerned by the escalation of feedback that I have received in recent months, expressing reservations about COPUOS' ability to deliver the solutions we need on time. While stakeholders do not question the legitimacy of this high body, their doubts are fuelled by observing an undue loss of precious time on procedure.

Just last week, I had a call with a senior colleague who has been in the UN for 30 years. He said *'Aarti, the UN is at a major inflection point. We must be entrepreneurial and dynamic, or we become dinosaurs.'* Some of you may believe that this kind of spirit is not appropriate for this body, but the reality is that the entire United Nations is now trying to embody this spirit, in order to remain relevant in a fast-changing and ever-divided world.

As the custodians of the peaceful uses of outer space, I do not need to tell you how fast this sector is evolving. I am a lawyer myself and I know there are many interesting legal topics that can be studied and discussed. My call to you is to remain focussed during the coming two weeks, to use your valuable time to advance and take action where it is truly needed, using the famous Vienna spirit to its full extent, so that your work remains directly relevant to the needs of our time. The challenges of today's space activities remain unresolved, and other bodies may step in to resolve them if we are unable to act in a timely manner. If we want to maintain the centrality of this high Committee and keep Vienna as the centre of gravity of space governance, we must overcome inertia and we must be prepared to innovate in how we work in order to deliver on our mandate.

There is really important work in progress at LSC this year and you have before you an opportunity that is not to be missed. The Space Resources Working Group can make a good start on the draft principles that have been circulated to States just a few weeks ago. The Working Group on the Five Treaties can transition from exchanging initial views on Article XI and information sharing to actually considering concrete tools for their operationalisation. ATLAC can give a final push to their workplan so that it is ready for endorsement by COPUOS in June and substantive work can finally begin. These are vital, tangible work streams that can deliver much-needed results that can be presented to the world at a potential UNISPACE IV in 2027, which, in itself, presents another key area in which you have an opportunity to make important progress.

Under my leadership, UNOOSA will be open to change, we will seek to maximise the opportunities for all Member States, we will be dynamic, and we will share our expertise. Having seen the work of this sub-committee, I know this message will be embraced and that your work will be delivered with ambition. I look forward to hearing from you all and working with you in the coming weeks.

Chairs, distinguished delegates, you can rest assured that UNOOSA is at your side and is doing its part. Next week, we will be convening the “*Second Meeting of National Focal Points on Registration*” which will contribute to developing a *Toolkit on Registration Practices* in Q3 2025 which will empower all nations to establish national registration frameworks.

I would also like to inform you of a Capacity-Building Workshop jointly organised by UNOOSA and the ITU in early June, entitled: “*From an ITU Filing to Registration with UNOOSA – The Life Cycle of a Satellite*” – this will benefit both the Vienna and Geneva communities.

With Space Sustainability and socio-economic growth and prosperity taking centre stage right now, States are becoming more aware of the need for robust legal frameworks – as such, we continue to help States develop space law and policies that promote economic investment and underpin national space activities through our Space Law for New Space Actors project. We still have a list of over 60 countries waiting for our assistance in this field and are proactively fundraising to support this demand and implement COPUOS commitments. A side event on this topic will take place on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May. On this topic, I would like to commend the Philippines Space Agency on the launch of their book “*Tala and Her Journey to Space*” - which educates children on space law.

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

During this Sub-Committee meeting, we will also have three very topical side-events on 1) *Commercial perspectives on space situational awareness* 2) *Space traffic: managing vs coordinating – what’s the difference and why it matters*; and finally on 3) *Enabling active debris removal and in-orbit servicing missions*.

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

You have now heard a bit about our tangible impact in the areas of space policy and law and how your work is critical. I hope you see that this impact can only be maintained through an honest and open conversation with you. So I have to be honest. 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 and I would like to use my remaining time to inform you about this.



**United Nations**  
Office for Outer Space Affairs

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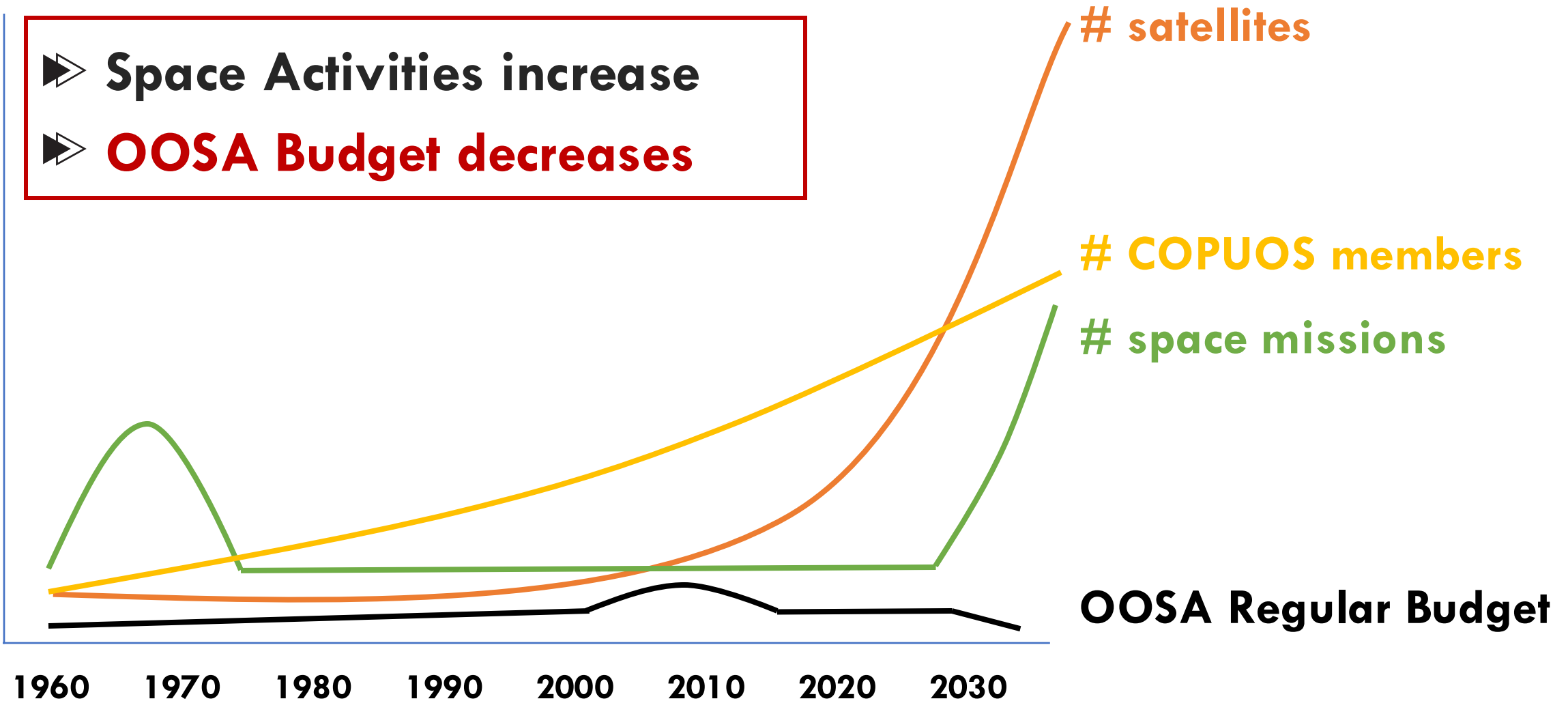


# Briefing on UNOOSA Resources

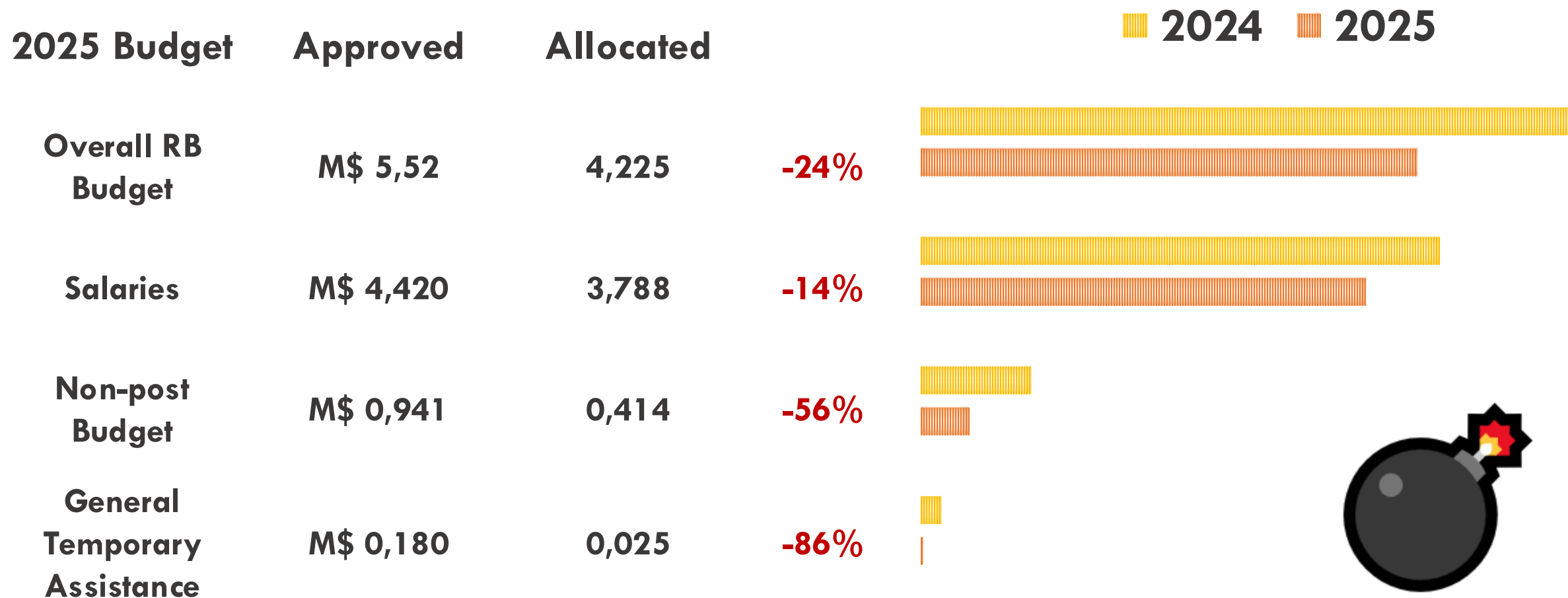
5<sup>th</sup> May 2025



- ▶ **Space Activities increase**
- ▶ **OOSA Budget decreases**







Indiscriminate application of budget cuts to an already small office



2025 Budget	Approved	Allocated	
Overall RB Budget	M\$ 5,52	4,225	-24%
Salaries	M\$ 4,420	3,788	-14%
Non-post Budget	M\$ 0,941	0,414	-56%
General Temporary Assistance	M\$ 0,180	0,025	-86%

- ▶▶ Non-Post includes grants for developing countries / travel / workshops / IT / consultants
- ▶▶ Further reduced to cover:
  - ⇒ Salary gap **\$85k potentially \$100k**
  - ⇒ Existing commitments **\$31.9k**
  - ⇒ Unavoidable running costs **\$160k**
- ▶▶ Leaving for now:
  - ⇒ **\$75k** capacity-building grants
  - ⇒ **\$37k** staff travel (entire office)
  - ⇒ **\$23k** UN SPIDER



**73% of Work Programme Activities cancelled**



## Critical positions cannot be filled

- ⇒ P5 Head of Space Application Section
- ⇒ P4 Head of UNSPIDER Bonn Office
- ⇒ P3 Project Officer for Registration
- ⇒ P3 Government Relations Officer (GTA)

## Other positions will be lost in 2025

- ⇒ Min. 3 x JPOs cannot be renewed

## Staff Well-Being

- ⇒ **Extreme workload**
- ⇒ **Uncertainty / anxiety**





## **Takes place with modifications:**

- Space Law Conference (in VIE)
- Dark & Quiet Skies (in VIE, reduced # participants, in-kind contribution from SKAO)
- ICG (1 Workshop only, Nigeria has HCA, reduced # participants, staff travel covered by XB)

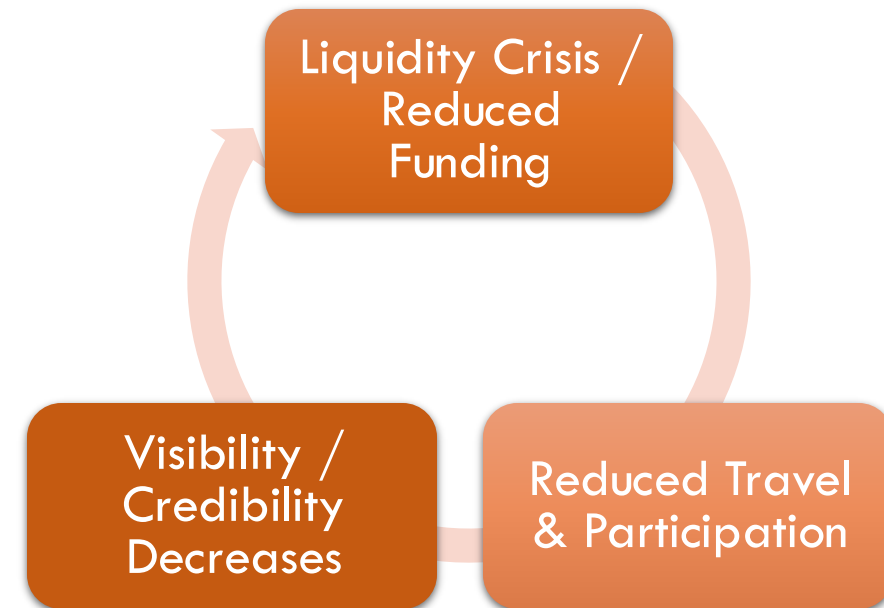
## **Cancelled (unless XB):**

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| ● World Space Forum   | ● UN Space                      |
| ● UNGA High-Level Week  | ● COP30                         |
| ● Regional Centres Directors Meeting  | ● Planned Expert Meeting        |
| ● UN/IAF (IAC) Workshop Space Science & Technology                            | ● Space4Women Expert Meeting    |
| ● Space4WaterWorkshop on EO for Water Quality                                 | ● UN Graz Symposium             |
| ● Access to Space4All (HyperGEs & DropTES rounds)                             | ● Space for Global Health       |
| ● Participation in UN Events (STI Forum, HLPF, HLPC)                          | ● SPIDER Regional Workshop SIDS |
| ● SPIDER Institutional Strengthening Mission to Dominican Republic and Gambia |                                 |



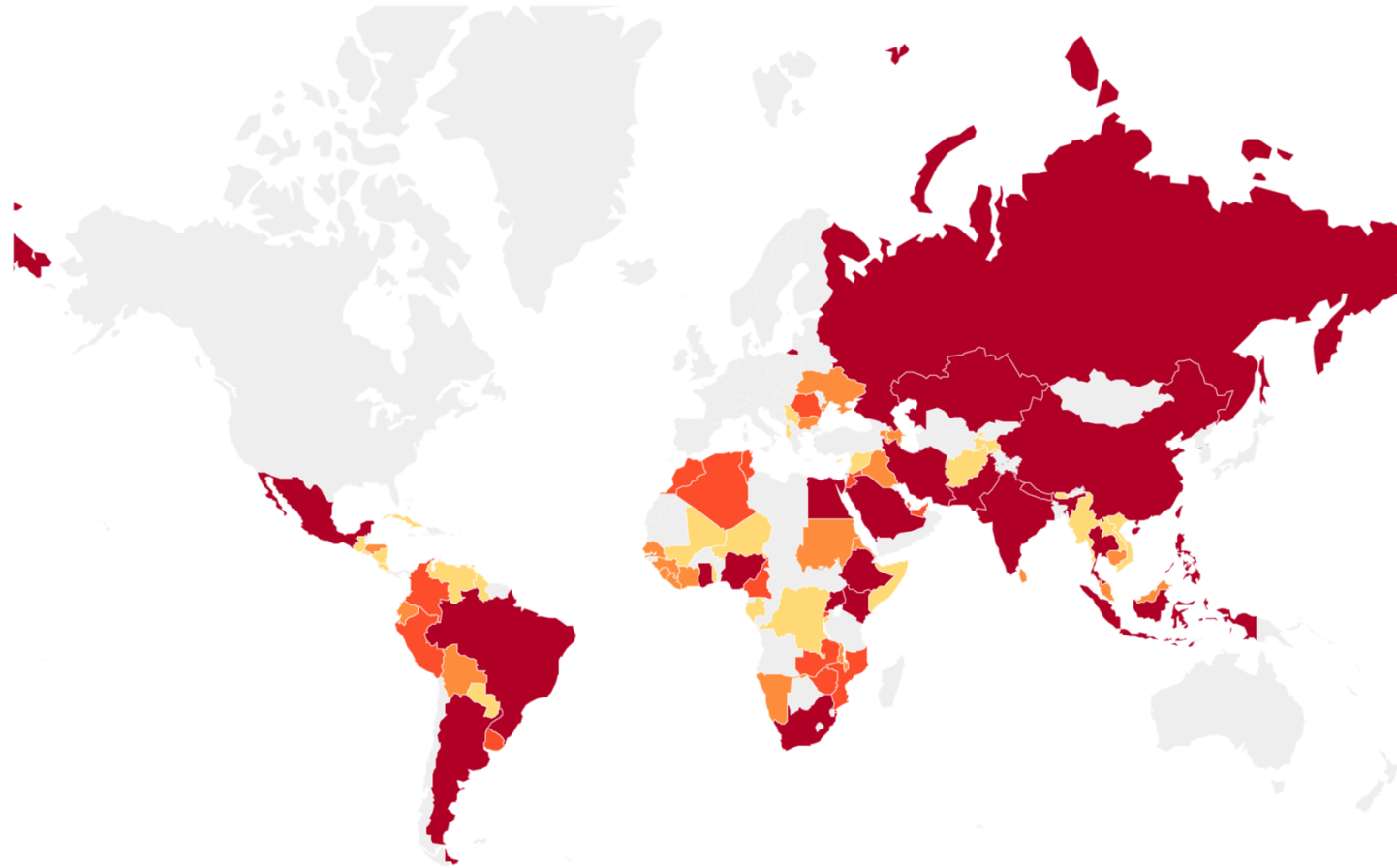


- ⇒ Many flagship events cancelled: no World Space Forum, UN Space, or COP 30 presence – **global dialogue stalls, UNOOSA is absent, COPUOS work not highlighted/defended**
- ⇒ 70 % of trainings & workshops gone – **All developing country experts, esp. SIDS/LDC lose support**
- ⇒ Access-to-Space-for-All rounds scrapped – **student innovation pipelines break**
- ⇒ Regional-centre meetings & expert missions halted – **countries left without technical back-up**
- ⇒ Commitments unmet → **reputational risk for the Office & Member States**





# Impact on Member States



- ⇒ No training for **540** experts from **90 developing countries**
- ⇒ **72%** come from “**Very-High-Impact**” states
- ⇒ Loss of trained practitioners  
→ delays in SDG reporting, slower disaster response times, & weaker climate-adaptation planning across different continents



## The GOOD

- ⇒ **Shortfall only M\$1,3**
- ⇒ **UNOOSA's activities receive universal praise**
- ⇒ **We are stepping up efforts towards MSs for XB funding**
- ⇒ **More private sector funding will be needed**

## The BAD

- ⇒ **The situation is dire & risks getting worse (future budget availability & potential impact of UN80)**

## The UGLY

- ⇒ **We are asked to provide lengthy proposals for peanuts**





- ▶ **Strategic Review of UNOOSA:** Assessing ability to deliver on mandate & MS expectations / identification of additional resource requirements & need to enhance OOSA visibility within UN system
- ▶ **Project Proposal Development:** in line with MS priorities / proposals have been shared
- ▶ **High-Level Engagement & Advocacy / Series of crisis meetings with:** Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) / Program Planning & Budget Division (PPBD) / Member States & Permanent Missions
- ▶ **Fundraising & Resource Mobilization:** Targeted outreach to traditional donors & foundations / Establishment of Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) to provide predictable, long-term financial support for Space Sustainability & Space for SDGs

Make the case for  
UNOOSA in NY (with  
PM *and* with SG)

Select proposals &  
mobilize resources to  
support us



Make the difference  
between stalled  
capacity & accelerated  
progress on the SDGs