

Statement by the European Space Agency (ESA)

64th session of the UN COPUOS Legal Subcommittee

Agenda item 4. Information on the activities of international intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations relating to space law

Distinguished Chair,

Let me first commend you for your able guidance and excellent work leading this Subcommittee. Let me also appreciate and thank the Office for Outer Space Affairs for its professional preparation, support, and guidance and Ms Holla-Maini for her excellent work as the office's Director.

Distinguished delegates,

As a permanent observer to the Committee, the European Space Agency remains deeply appreciative of the opportunity to address this Subcommittee and share its efforts and objectives in advancing space cooperation in space research, technology, and applications.

As an intergovernmental organisation, ESA holds the value of international law and multilateral cooperation in realising space's potential to help build a sustainable future, contribute to climate objectives, enable discoveries, bring technological advancement, create economic opportunities and inspire people around the planet. ESA acts both as a spacecraft operator and a space agency, serving as a cooperation framework for its twenty-three Member States (including the Republic of Slovenia, which has joined ESA in January of this year), three Associate Members, four European Cooperating States, Canada, and a continuously expanding network of international partners.

In 2024, ESA continued to deliver on its mandate to foster peaceful cooperation in space, pushing the frontiers of science and technology while supporting the sustainable development of space activities. Allow me to highlight some of ESA's recent milestones:

- Ariane 6, ESA's versatile heavy-duty launcher, achieved a significant milestone with its inaugural flight, marking a new chapter of Europe's autonomous and competitive access to space. In addition, Vega-C, ESA's lightweight and high-performance rocket, successfully deployed the Sentinel-1C satellite from the Copernicus constellation. Most recently, it launched the Biomass satellite, which will enhance our understanding of the role forests play in the carbon cycle, and by extension, in the Earth's climate system.
- The successful launch of the Arctic Weather satellite in August marked an important step towards improved forecasting in the Arctic and globally. In October, the Hera mission – ESA's first planetary defence mission – was

successfully launched, contributing to global efforts to strengthen planetary safety.

- The 11th ESA-EU Space Council in May 2024 provided renewed momentum for strengthening Europe's competitiveness through space. Reflecting on the organisations' constructive partnership, ESA and the European Commission signed a collaboration arrangement on the ESA Accelerators to support the EU's Green Deal and contribute to its space strategy for security and defence.
- In pursuit of space safety and sustainability, ESA has continued to advance the community-driven Zero Debris Charter – a non-legally binding initiative that sets out high-level guiding principles and collectively defined targets, complemented by a recently released Technical Booklet. Open to all interested entities, the Charter has already attracted 168 signatories, reflecting the broad and growing commitment across the space sector.

This year marks a historic moment for ESA as we celebrate our 50th anniversary. For five decades, ESA has been a cornerstone of European and international space cooperation, contributing to peaceful exploration and responsible space behaviour. 2025 will also see ESA's Council meeting at ministerial level, to be held in Bremen, Germany, a key event where Member States will decide on future investments in space. These decisions will shape Europe's space activities for the next decade and reinforce the commitment to sustainability, innovation, and international collaboration. In view of the years to come, ESA has recently published its Strategy 2040, emphasising the important role space can play in every aspect of citizens' lives across Europe.

Distinguished delegates,

The role and rule of law for space activities remain of utmost importance for ESA. As one of the first intergovernmental organisations to have declared acceptance of the rights and obligations under three UN space treaties, ESA places high importance on the development and application of space law. It actively advances its understanding and provides advisory support to its Member States, upon request, on matters pertaining to international space governance, while continuing to assist them in establishing and implementing space legislation through technical and legal advice.

Let me conclude by underlining ESA's continued commitment to contribute to the global space community as a responsible space actor, accelerating the benefits and use of space for all, strengthening the role and rule of law in outer space and contributing as a permanent observer to the work of this Committee.

Thank you.