

Netherlands Statement

Agenda Item 3 – General exchange of views - 26 April AM

Delivered by: Johan Kroon, Radiocommunications Agency Netherlands

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, Fifty-eighth session, Vienna, 19–30 April 2021.

Dear Madam Chair, thank you for giving me the floor. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few developments in the Netherlands over the last year:

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates,

- The number of space activities in the Netherlands is growing structurally, resulting in an increase in the number of Dutch space operators and satellites under Dutch jurisdiction and control. Last year there were five licensees under the Dutch Space Act which operated eighteen Dutch satellites: ten Geostationary satellites and eight Low Earth Orbit satellites.
- A good example of this increase in the number of Dutch satellites are the space activities of the Dutch 'NewSpace' startup Hiber. In June 2020 this company was granted a license for their space operations from the Netherlands for their satellite constellation network for a worldwide Machine-to-Machine and Internet of Things connectivity. The total number of satellites for this network is expected to increase to 48 satellites for bringing full M2M and IoT-connectivity to the globe.
- In April 2020 the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy conducted a study to provide insight into the added value of space technology in the Netherlands. Since 2014, the employment in the Dutch space sector has increased by 20 percent and provides more than 10.000 jobs and nearly 2 billion euros are spent in the Dutch space sector.

For the coming years the Dutch space policy focuses on earth observation, satellite communication and the use of satellite data and signals because of their social importance and the economic opportunities.

One of the Dutch space policy priorities which I specifically want to emphasize is the promotion and support of the use of satellite data for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In the Netherlands opinion satellite data is indispensable for monitoring sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Furthermore, on the 17th of June 2020, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate organized a workshop on Space Traffic Management in which all Dutch space operators and R&D-institutions participated. One of the outcomes of this Space Traffic Management workshop was that the Dutch space operators would like to see a national government that supports and stimulates good STM behavior on the national level. Also the Dutch Space operators indicated that they prefer a global international Space Traffic Management framework via either guidelines, treaties or else under the mandate of UN COPUOS to preserve and protect the outer space environment for use by current and future space operations.
- The ongoing deployment of thousands of satellites in the Low Earth Orbit is a development from the recent years. The influence of such satellite constellations on professional astronomical observations has unfortunately not been adequately considered. The deployment of these satellite constellations has major influence on the visibility of the night skies. As a result large numbers of satellites are detected during their flight paths by the highly sensitive modern telescopes.

The effects caused by satellite constellations calls for an internationally agreed regulation, and this matter, in our view, falls within the core remit of the UN COPUOS.

The Netherlands Delegation therefore considers that the concerns raised by the Conference Room Paper "Recommendations to Keep Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society", presented by the International Astronomical Union, are very relevant and require attention at international level.

The Netherlands Delegation concurs with the recommendations presented by this Conference Room Paper and believes that as part of the licensing procedure for getting access to space for satellite constellations member states should also take in account the interests of the International Astronomical Union.

- Madam Chair, I reaffirm our satisfaction that the Committee adopted the preamble and 21 guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. I also express our satisfaction that COPUOS established a 5 year LTS Working Group. In our view, this is an important step for sharing experiences, good practices and lessons learnt with regard to the implementation of the 21 so far adopted guidelines. In this regard this new Working Group is also important for raising awareness and capacity-building and for considering new guidelines because technology and space activities evolve rapidly and the use of space is critically important for society. We are confident that the composition of the Bureau of this new LTS Working Group will be concluded during this fifty-eighth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and that the Working Group can define its terms of reference, methods of work and work plan, in accordance with its mandate.
- Madam Chair, I finally would like to mention that as a commitment of the Netherlands to a safe, stable and sustainable outer space environment. The Netherlands started in the end of 2020 with an analysis of how the 21 LTS guidelines match up with our existing regulations and how our current Space Act could be adapted accordingly. The results of this analysis is foreseen this year and will also serve as input for our process to amend our space Act at a later stage.

Thank you for your attention.