

Statement by Bulgaria under agenda item 17 „Dark and quiet skies”

Mr. Chair, distinguished Delegates,

Bulgaria, together with Spain, Chile, Slovakia, Dominican Republic and South Africa has submitted the Conference Room Paper on the Protection of Dark and Quiet Skies for science and society. We fully share the concern that the sun-reflected luminosity and their radio-frequency emissions have a serious impact on astronomical observations as well as on the pristine appearance of the night sky. We therefore find it important to establish an expert group where all stakeholders, in particular the astronomical community, space industry and the constellations' companies can collaborate in studying and implementing all possible measures that can mitigate the negative impact of the constellations on astronomy and on the visibility of the pristine night sky.

The Republic of Bulgaria has a long tradition in astronomical observations in the optical range and is home to the largest astronomical Observatory of South Eastern Europe - National Astronomical Observatory „Rozhen“. Already a project has also been launched to build a radio astronomy station, which will be the only one in the region and which will be part of the pan-European project International LOFAR telescope. These two infrastructures (Radio and LOFAR-BG) are National Roadmap for Research Infrastructure 2020-2027 and are part of the extremely important for the development of Bulgarian science and astronomy in particular. Their activities are threatened by the growing light pollution of the night sky. A particularly pressing problem at the moment is the constellations of small satellites in low orbit, from which several thousand have been launched so far, but it is expected in the near future this number to grow to tens and even hundreds of thousands. Not only do they interfere with direct observations in the visible area with the telescopes of National Astronomical Observatory „Rozhen“, but put at risk and observations in the radio range.

We encourage all state parties to support the Conference paper and to make sure that the informal Expert group can report the outcome of its work to this body in the next three years.

Thank you for your attention.