

Long-term sustainability of outer space activities

60th STSC (6 – 17 February 2023)

Mr. Johann SPITZER, Minister-Counsellor

Chair,
Excellencies – Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year, for the first time since the start of human activity in space, we have recorded more space debris in orbit than operational satellites. This fact and many more recent figures on the evolution of the space environment can be found in the **Annual Space Environment Report of ESA 2022**.

As space debris poses a problem for the near Earth environment on a global scale, **only a globally supported solution can be the answer**.

Against this background, the **adoption of the 21 Guidelines on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space in 2019** and the subsequent set up of a **Working Group LTS 2.0** was a great achievement of COPUOS. The informal intersessional consultations in November 2022 showed the great interest of Member States and recognizes the need for action and the necessity to address this issue at this level in order to achieve practical guidance for current and emerging challenges in this context.

At this point I would like to thank the **Chairperson** to the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Affairs, **Mr. Umamaheswaran R. (India)** and the **UN Office for Outer Space Affairs**, in particular **Tanja Keusen**, for their outstanding leadership and support of this important work.

Austria submitted a **national report on the voluntary implementation of the LTS guidelines**, a concise overview for the translated document and a longer version with detailed consideration of the individual guidelines.

Since the 1960s, Austria has built up **specific expertise and technological specialisations** in certain fields of space, including environmental observation, electric propulsion and quantum communications. Austria's space landscape is characterized by dynamic small and medium-sized enterprises, an increasing number of start-ups and established research institutions. Austria pursues international cooperation to advance comprehensive and sustainable

solutions to socio-political and environmental challenges and to contribute to a fostering of scientific and technological excellence. Austria's space sector has become a recognized partner in the European and international space community through our participation in European and International Space programs.

We thank you **Chair for your Working Paper** on ideas for an information repository and for the proposed Agenda of the Workshop to be held in 2024.

We think that such a **repository of guidelines-related information** would be an excellent tool to facilitate capacity development concerning the implementation of the guidelines. The repository should aim to be user-friendly and searchable to render accessible the considerable expertise contained in the individual submissions. We therefore are also in favour of an **agreed template for submitting information** on implementation practice.

For the submission of our national implementation, we referred to the **template provided by the United Kingdom**, given its clarity and ease of use in approaching the different guidelines and the different levels of implementation. But of course any agreed template would be fine for us.

We would like to draw particular attention to the importance of consistent and comprehensive information-sharing and registration by all space actors for the continued peaceful use of outer space. Enhancing the practices and the improvement of registration discipline would contribute to a more transparent and sustainable cooperation in outer space.

We also thank you for the ideas for the **workshop to be held on the margins of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 2024**. We believe that these opportunities to share experiences and lessons learnt are very valuable and necessary to **build a common understanding** about the **current implementation practice** and **possible challenges** in the implementation. We believe that **participation of the private sector** and academia could be conducive to enhance understanding and learning. As capacity development in this field is essential for all of us, we support the proposal to use the time allocated to the annual industry symposium for the workshop, but at the same time, we think that more time will be needed and we welcome further proposals in this respect.

We are looking forward to the continuing discussions within the Working Group during the sessions.

Last but not least, I would like to inform you that in November 2022, Austria signed the **"Statement for a Responsible Space Sector"** together with the European Space Agency and other European Actors. This non-legally binding instrument expresses a commitment of the Austrian Space Sector to contribute to the long-term sustainability of space projects and works towards a socially and environmentally responsible management of space activities.