

Austria, Item 17

**Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society**

**60<sup>th</sup> STSC (6 – 17 February 2023)**

**Thomas Hollensteiner**

Chair,  
Excellencies – colleagues,

Large satellite constellations are a **major economic factor** and will undoubtedly make a major contribution to global communication. These mega-constellations however also have a **huge impact on astronomical observations**.

The **protection of Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society** for future generations is a serious concern which Austria shares. We have been tackling this topic in the Subcommittee since three years and **acknowledge the space dimension**. Due to the rapid increase of mega-constellations, the matter of Dark and Quiet Skies needs special **awareness** and detailed **guidance**.

Therefore, Austria sees merit in discussing the protection of night skies from light pollution on a multilateral level, as this would allow a coherent pooling of all aspects related to the sustainability of space activities, and lead to provide a coherent set of recommendations to member states and other stakeholders.

During the **informal consultations of the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities in November 2022**, the inclusion of this topic in the considerations of the Working Group has already been discussed inconclusively.

We therefore welcome the **proposal of Chile**, together with **Bulgaria, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Slovakia, South Africa and Spain**, as well as the **International Astronomical Union (IAU)**, the **European Organization for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere (ESO)** and the **Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO)** to set up an **Expert Group** for a duration of three years and to **keep the topic Dark and Quiet Skies on the STSC Agenda** for the duration of the Expert Group.

The Expert Group would **regularly report to the STSC** and could also report to the **Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities**, enabling delegations to keep track of the progress of the work and to accompany the work accordingly.

Austria supports this proposal and stands ready to support the Expert Group with appropriate expertise.

Thank you, chair!