

Germany, Item 10

**UNCOPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee**

61<sup>st</sup> Session, Vienna, 29 January–9 February 2024

Statement by Germany on

**Agenda item 10: Near-Earth objects**

Madam Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

We express our special thanks to the Coordinator of IAWN and the Chair of SMPAG for presenting an initiative to declare 2029 the international year of asteroid awareness and planetary defence. We deeply value the work of the expert community on this proposal.

In Germany the issue of planetary defense is of great importance. We therefore financially and technically support the AIDA mission, a joint NASA and ESA effort through our major contributions to the HERA mission. The HERA spacecraft will evaluate the effect of the Double Asteroid Redirection Test – DART – impact into Dimorphos, the smaller body of the binary asteroid system Didymos. The results of the HERA mission will deepen our understanding of asteroid deflection and enlarge the knowledge of asteroids in general. We are also a founding member of SMPAG and its legal Working Group and invite all member states to assess a potential accession.

It is therefore that Germany welcomes the initiative and shares the belief that the close approach of the asteroid Apophis on 13 April 2029 is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness for a better understanding of asteroids, how they might affect life on Earth and what options we have available to protect ourselves from a catastrophic impact. We also believe that such awareness raising activities, coming from an informed expert

community, would help dispel misconceptions surrounding asteroids, especially as the close approach of Apophis is likely to attract broad attention in general society and media.

We therefore would like to voice our support to the idea to declare 2029 the international year of asteroid awareness and planetary defence. We would appreciate to hear the opinion of other delegations about this initiative. Given that it might take a little while to fully study and assess this proposal, we would welcome a recommendation by this Subcommittee in its report that the Committee considers this proposal at its sixty-seventh session in June, with a view to recommending to the General Assembly to declare 2029 the international year of asteroid awareness and planetary defence.

We look forward to further discussions on this issue.

Thank you for your kind attention.