

## **Statement by SMPAG Chair to STSC 61st session (2024)**

*Madame Chair, distinguished delegates,*

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Subcommittee. As Chair of the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG) on behalf of ESA, I'm pleased to inform delegations about our work progress.

*Madame Chair, distinguished delegates,*

The purpose of SMPAG is to prepare for an international response to a near- Earth object (NEO) impact threat through the exchange of information, development of options for collaborative research and mission opportunities, and NEO threat mitigation planning activities.

SMPAG is comprised of space agencies and offices. We are very pleased to report that in our last meeting on Wednesday, 31 Jan 2024, we have been joined by the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) as member. We now have 19 members and 7 observer organizations. SMPAG is chaired by the European Space Agency (re-elected for the period 2023-2025). The UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) acts as Secretariat to SMPAG, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/90.

*Madame Chair, distinguished delegates,*

SMPAG usually meets twice per year. Since our last reporting to this Subcommittee, SMPAG held its 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in October 2023 virtually, and its 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting in conjunction with this session of the Subcommittee, on 31 January. We are very pleased to report that at this meeting, we were also joined by representatives from the Indian Space Agency (ISRO), and we noted the indication of their interest to joining SMPAG.

This year marks 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary since SMPAG held its first meeting and I would like to invite space agencies from other member States to join SMPAG in our common endeavour to build capacities and strengthen international collaboration in case of an asteroid impact hazard. Feel free to reach out to UNOOSA as the Secretariat. The SMPAG Terms of Reference and other informative documents are available at our webpage: [smpag.net](http://smpag.net).

*Madame Chair, distinguished delegates,*

Over the last year, SMPAG continued its international exercise to develop a coordinated response in case of a serious asteroid impact threat. I would like to thank ASI for taking the lead on this. The SMPAG Working Group on Legal Issues continued its work at this meeting and in preceding inter-sessional discussions.

*Madame Chair, distinguished delegates,*

SMPAG is actively supporting the initiative that builds upon the unique opportunity of the close approach by asteroid Apophis in 2029, namely the possibility for an UN-designated international year

of planetary defence in 2029. As the speaker before me, I would like to encourage member states to support the Conference Room Paper 20 on the topic that has been made available in this session. We thank the European Space Agency for sponsoring a reception on 31 January, where Delegations had the possibility to learn more about this initiative.

SMPAG acknowledges the work currently done by many space agencies for space-based reconnaissance of Apophis. Fully characterising Apophis during its close flyby will be important to demonstrating capabilities for planetary defence.

*Madame Chair, distinguished delegates,* thank you for your kind attention.