

UNCOPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

61st Session, Vienna, 29 January–9 February 2024

Statement by Germany on

Agenda item 12: Future role and method of work of the Committee

Madam Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

We had originally expected to begin our consideration of an agenda item related to dark and quiet skies and large constellations under this agenda item, but were very pleased that we could start it earlier through the Working Group of the Whole. Last year, we entered a drafting exercise on a possible agenda item towards the end of the session, leaving us with little time to carefully think about various proposals. We welcome that we have already had several opportunities to consider a new agenda item during this session, and we hope that through an iterative process, we can invoke the Vienna Spirit and arrive at a consensus by the end of the session.

Madam Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Instead of a detailed presentation of our views on existing proposals, we want to highlight more generally what we consider important in regards to dark and quiet skies and large constellations, without prejudice to the views and priorities of other delegations. Over the past three years, we heard about the challenges that the astronomical community is facing by the introduction of a large number of satellites in low-Earth orbits and we were listening to them to get a better understanding of the situation, including about the substantial impacts that astronomy has on modern science and society. We were also encouraged that the community was engaging with industry and satellite operators to assess those challenges

and explore measures to mitigate them jointly and in a spirit of cooperation. We hoped that this Committee could serve as an additional forum to foster exchanges among experts and interested member states, and therefore supported to establish an expert group. In the past, the Committee has been most successful when it first brought together experts to study and discuss an issue, and then considered and acted based on their recommendations. Such examples can especially be found on issues related to the sustainable use of outer space, such as space debris mitigation or the long-term sustainability of space activities. We still hope that this will also be a possible path for the preservation of dark and quiet skies. We will therefore continue to work towards a consensus on establishing an agenda item at this session.

Madame Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

We welcome that in the intersessional period, Chile and Spain, with the support of the International Astronomical Union, have established a Group of Friends on dark and quiet skies to further study the impacts of large constellations on astronomy and explore measures to mitigate such impacts. Germany was happy join the Group of Friends with a number of experts, and we hope that the group can develop insights that support and inform our work here at the Committee.

Madame Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

We are glad to see that the Vienna space community is very interested in the Summit of the Future and closely examines the Zero Draft of the Pact of the Future. It is great to see that Vienna is "bursting its bubble" and is committed to bringing its expertise to New York. In our conversations here in Vienna, we perceived an interest in strengthening the role of the Office for Outer Space Affairs with the help of the Pact for the Future, and would like to highlight the opportunity to submit written comments until 12 February to the consultation process in New York. We also cordially

invite you to join our Side Event on Wednesday at lunch time and look forward to hearing your perspectives on the zero draft.

Thank you for your kind attention.