

Portugal Statement
Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses
of Outer Space | 61st session

Agenda Item 4, “General Exchange of Views”

Madam Chair, Distinguished Representatives,

1. As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor in this session, I would like to congratulate you, Madam Botezatu, on your election as Chair of the Subcommittee and assure you of our best cooperation. I would also like to express our appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Ambassador Juan Francisco Facetti, for his skilful guidance over the past two years and to thank the Secretariat for their excellent work in supporting this meeting and the ongoing works.
2. We would also like to congratulate the new UNOOSA Director, Aarti Holla-Maini, and her team, for taking this challenging endeavour and convey Portugal’s full support and cooperation in the way forward, so clearly expressed in the beginning of our works. Finally, a special mention to previous acting director, Nicklas Headman, for his wide expertise and relentless support to COPUOS and its subcommittees.
3. Further to the statement delivered earlier by the distinguished representative of the European Union - which we fully support in all its extension, including the references to the situation in Ukraine and on the proposal of a new resolution -, we would like to convey some additional points in this Subcommittee under our national capacity.

Madam Chair,

4. Portugal wants to actively contribute to the outer space dialogue. Together with UNOOSA, Portugal will host the High-Level Conference **Management & Sustainability of Space Activities**, on the road to the Summit of the Future. The Conference will be held in Lisbon, next 14 and 15 of May, organized in full alignment with the appointed co-facilitators of the inter-governmental consultations on the preparatory process of the **Summit of the Future**, Germany and Namibia.
5. To explain the process, Portugal is co-organising with UNOOSA the **joint side event**, on February 6, in Room M2, dedicated to present the outcomes of the virtual technical symposium held in November 2023, as written summary to be submitted. It will also be presented the structured agenda of the virtual policy symposium, to be held from the 11

to the 15 of March, as well as it will provide a background information on the planning and preparations of the main in-person conference in May 2024.

6. With regards to the virtual symposium from last November 2023, Portugal would like to acknowledge the active contribution of all speakers, moderators and rapporteurs for the excellent information shared in the different sessions and the active contributions from Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Chile, France, Germany, India, Japan, Luxemburg, South Korea, Switzerland, United Aarab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, and many others. Portugal would also like to express its appreciation for the great work of the UNOOSA team.
7. Following the path of the contributions to the **Zero draft**, the High-Level Conference in May should look beyond the **Summit of the Future** to discuss, in an open forum, the future of Management and Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, to address the needs and ways to reinforce space governance and further strengthen the sustainability of human space activities and its consequences, aiming to provide effective frameworks of international coordination and collaboration.
8. Portugal welcomes the joint UN, Austria and Space Generation Advisory Council initiative in fostering a **Declaration on Future Generations**, as youth is fundamental to any endeavor on these topics, intended to be solid, enduring and having in mind the intergenerational solidarity, both in Earth as in Space.

Madam Chair,

9. Portugal is fully committed to the sustainable use of outer space, having an active participation in space safety programmes of the European Space Agency, such as **ClearSpace-1**, a mission to remove an existing derelict object from orbit through highly precise, complex, close proximity operations; the **Hera** mission, that will turn the grand-scale experiment into a well-understood and repeatable planetary defence technique, to be launched this year, or the **Deorbiting Kit** with the goal of develop autonomous deorbiting systems for future LEO missions. Furthermore, through the Competitiveness Segment, Portugal is supporting the development of **Space Traffic Management** capabilities in the Portuguese industry.
10. As such, Portugal is much looking forward for the works and the workshop under the workplan of the **Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities**.
11. Having in mind the Portuguese Space Agency motto, "*a sustainable Space for a sustainable Earth*", the Agency has been developing the "**Earth Observation for Municipalities**"

initiative, where the needs of local institutions are discussed and, at the same time, the potential of Earth Observation in seeking solutions is promoted, in a way that all municipalities, regardless of their location, can access information collected by space technologies and become familiar with the national, regional, and local ecosystem they can collaborate with.

12. Portugal actively pursues a strong agenda in education on STEM and Space.
13. Since 2020, Portugal hosts the **European Rocketry Challenge**, the first international rocket launch competition for European university students, that has gathered teams from various European countries, aiming to promote access to space knowledge. In the 2023 edition more than 600 students, from 13 European countries, participated in a 7 full days competition.
14. Portugal also created, in 2022, the national competition **Astronaut for a day**. Through a competition dedicated to high school students, between 14 and 18 years old, students participate in a very similar real astronaut selection procedure with 4 different phases. In the last edition more than 600 students competed to be one of the 30 students that were selected to perform the zero G flight.
15. The “astronauts for a day”, then become space ambassadors within their school community and are responsible to promote the following edition of the competition. The profound impact of this initiative is such, that it has been replicated by other European countries. Portugal happily supported the Luxemburg competition and others that are currently under preparation. This initiative also allowed to bring the non-space sector into space activities. For the first time, the Portuguese textile industry has contributed by developing and improving the flight suits, used by the participants during the flight.

Madam Chair,

16. Finally, regarding **Dark and Quiet Skies**, Portugal recalls that sustainability and preservation of nocturnal skies is important not only to enhance our understanding of the Universe, but also to protect space as a heritage of all humanity and for the protection of nocturnal wildlife from light pollution. As such, we fully support the inclusion of an agenda item regarding this topic.

Thank you, Madam Chair.