



STATEMENT BY THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY OBSERVATORY

The 61st session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the United Nations
Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

AGENDA ITEM 4: General Exchange of Views

Read by: Federico di Vruno (SKAO Spectrum Manager)

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Check against delivery.

Chair,

Thank you for allowing me to express some general views of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory ~~or~~ SKAO. As an international intergovernmental organisation, the SKAO is tasked with constructing and operating two of the largest and most sensitive radio telescopes in the world. SKAO is headquartered in the United Kingdom, with the SKA-Mid telescope in South Africa and the SKA-Low telescope in Australia. Both telescopes are being constructed in pristine radio-quiet environments protected by national Radio Quiet Zones, a status we are committed to maintaining for our, and future observatories. We anticipate the commencement of telescope operations by the year 2029.

Chair,

Recognising astronomy as the earliest form of space exploration, the SKAO attaches great importance to space. Beyond ~~conducting~~ ~~planning~~ joint and complementary observations with space-based telescopes, and producing observations useful for space weather forecasting, we see with concern how human activities in space can have a direct impact on our skies, as our windows to the Universe. Given that astronomy is inherently multi-wavelength and relies on radio, infra-red, optical and higher energy telescopes, the preservation of the Dark and Quiet Skies is paramount.

Chair,

It is encouraging to hear the vivid discussions of Member States considering the protection of the Dark and Quiet Skies, and we would like to highlight that the work of COPUOS in this area has not gone unnoticed. The International Telecommunication Union has recognised the work of the committee in the Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2023, where in “considering h)” of Resolution COM6/11 says, I quote: “that the potential impact of non-GSO satellite systems on astronomy has been recognized and is currently being discussed in the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) under the name “Dark and Quiet Skies”, end quote.

Chair,

The SKAO commends all delegations for their flexibility in reaching a compromise agreement on the title of the agenda item on Dark and Quiet Skies and Large Constellations. We have full confidence that firmly believe the subcommittee will again find consensus on its duration and scopes that a forward-looking approach is essential to safeguard the Earth-Space environment, with due consideration for all activities dependent on space. With this, tThe subcommittee will lay the founding blocks is stance is vital for the advancing humanity-space activities while ensuring that the access to pristine skies and exploration of space through astronomy is safeguarded for our and future generations.

Chair,

The SKAO is~~We are~~ proud to be part of the Group of Friends of the Dark and Quiet Skies, established by the delegations of Chile and Spain, where now 165 delegations and 6 permanent observers participate. We hope that this group will serve as an informal mechanism to advance discussions during the intersessional period with the inclusion of industry and academia.

Chair,

As this topic is of clear interest, we would like to inform the sub-committee ~~session~~ about the upcoming General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union to be held in August this year in Cape Town, South Africa. The assembly will feature a dedicated sub-meeting of the Centre for the Protection of the Dark and Quiet Skies from Satellite Constellation Interference (or IAU CPS), we invite delegations interested in this topic to participate.

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