

## **New Zealand Statement**

Item 12: Future role and method of work of the Committee

Sixty-first session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee

### **Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**

29 January to 9 February 2024, Vienna

#### **As Delivered**

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Thank you Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Aotearoa New Zealand's views on the future role and method of work of the Committee.

Firstly I would like to highlight the importance of COPUOS continuing to consider the impact of human-made objects on the use of the night sky for science and society.

New Zealand recognises that satellites in low-Earth orbit can have unintended impacts on uses of the night sky. We are grateful to the international astronomical community for their continued efforts in advancing this important issue, and the leadership of many states in bringing the matter to the attention of the Committee. The visibility of satellites in the night sky impacts a range of astronomical activities undertaken in New Zealand and around the world, including science activity such as astronomy, cultural activity such as Māori astronomy, or tātai arorangi, and economic activity such as tourism in night-sky reserves.

We also acknowledge the critical role satellite-enabled services and data play in enhancing global connectivity, understanding and protecting our environment, providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief, and many more important issues. Further work is needed to understand the trade-offs that may be needed between satellite operators and the astronomical community.

It is clear that the impact of satellites on the night sky must be addressed through international cooperation and coordination. With increasing numbers of satellites being

launched to low-Earth orbit it is important for the international space community to act quickly. New Zealand supports a COPUOS agenda item and agreement on this issue as soon as possible.

It is important that a wide range of perspectives are heard on this issue and we support engaging experts from the astronomical community, the international space sector and indigenous communities to ensure that the Committee progresses this work in a pragmatic way for all impacted groups.

New Zealand also recognises the importance of the impact of satellites in low-Earth orbit on radio-astronomy. However, we believe that the International Telecommunications Union is best placed to take forward the issue of satellite radio-interference. Managing the use of the radio spectrum is clearly within the mandate and expertise of that body.

New Zealand is committed to working with COPUOS member states to build our collective understanding of this issue and develop a way forward.

Chair,

The second issue we want to raise relates to the Sub-Committee's method of work. We welcome positive steps taken in recent years to improve the method of work, in particular the agreement last year, and implemented this year, for a more sequential agenda which allows items to flow in a logical manner. Despite these changes, we believe the agenda remains too large to enable sufficient time to focus on important emerging issues. We therefore continue to support efforts to streamline the agenda by combining similar agenda items where practical. This becomes especially important as we discuss adding an agenda item focused on Dark and Quiet Skies.

Thank you Chair.