Long-term sustainability of outer space activities 62nd Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (3 – 14 February 2025)

Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

There is a growing awareness of the long-term sustainability of space. Recently, the **Austrian Parliament** issued a report on the **'Environmental Impact of Space Activities'**. The monitoring for this report is carried out by the Institute of Technology Assessment of the Austrian Academy of Sciences on behalf of the Parliament.

The report emphasises the central role of satellite-based data in the fields of climate and environment, but also in the areas of mobility, energy and banking. However, it also highlights some problematic environmental impacts. These include well-known issues such as space debris, collision risks, re-entry emissions, hazards from re-entering rocket parts or broken satellites, and the impairment of astronomy. Other impacts that have received less attention due to the relatively low launch density to date are equally important. These include ozone-depleting emissions – such as from aluminium and chlorine – in the upper atmosphere and significant greenhouse gas emissions from the vast quantities of fuel used in rocket launches, including CO2, water vapour and soot particles.

If we are to ensure the sustainable use of outer space, these unresolved issues must be addressed.

Looking ahead, the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities is expected to produce its report by 2025, to be presented to the 63rd session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 2026. We extend our gratitude to the Chair of the Working Group, Dr. Umamaheswaran R., for his tireless efforts. Austria supports the proposed structure and outline of this report, which aims to present consensus results and recommendations on future activities and work.

Austria has also **contributed to assessing the challenges**. We implement the guidelines through the Austrian Outer Space Act, which has been in force since 2011. In addition, we actively contribute to the European Union and the European Space Agency's programmes and initiatives. Austria participates in the EU's Space Surveillance and Tracking Consortium and has signed both, the ESA Zero Debris Charter and the Statement for a Responsible Space Sector.

On Guideline A.3., I am pleased to share a new development: the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology is finalizing **a framework agreement with the European Space Agency**. This agreement will secure ESA's technical support and expertise for Austria's national space authorization process, leveraging ESA's unparalleled experience. Nonetheless, the Ministry will retain ultimate responsibility for authorizations.

Finally, I am delighted to inform you that the **Centre of Excellence for Space and Sustainability (CESS)** will be established **at the European Space Policy Institute (ESPI)** with the support of Austria and become operational this year. It will focus on developing interdisciplinary expertise on sustainability, both on Earth and in space. Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential in this area. Austria encourages UNOOSA to cooperate with the CESS and hopes that it can contribute to UNOOSA's efforts on Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities.

Thank you.