



Statement by the European Astronomical Society

AGENDA ITEM 15: Dark and quiet skies, astronomy and large constellations: addressing emerging issues and challenges.

United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)
Scientific and Technical Subcommittee – 62nd Session

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Delivered by: Sara Lucatello, President

Chair, distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to address the subcommittee in its 62nd session on behalf of the European Astronomical Society (EAS), in my capacity as the President. As it is the first time we take the floor, I would like to extend my appreciation to the UNOOSA office for their excellent preparation of the meeting, and to the director Aarti Holla-Maini and you, chair, Ulpia Elena Botezatu, for your exemplary leadership.

Chair,

The EAS is an organization representing over 5,000 professional astronomers and more than 30 affiliated national societies across Europe. It is dedicated to advancing scientific collaboration and promoting research excellence; we are also involved in capacity building endeavors, and regularly engage with European policy makers and funding agencies.

Chair

It is a particular honor for the EAS to be the first permanent observer delivering a statement under the new agenda item “Dark and quiet skies”, that is so important to our activities. We are grateful for the recognition of the importance of the issue with the establishing of the agenda item, and are encouraged by the commitment expressed already by several delegations to contribute to this discussion. It is our belief that under this agenda item, over the next five years delegations will have an appropriate forum to exchange their views and discuss constructive approaches to preserve the Dark and Quiet Skies, a precious and fragile shared resource for humankind.

Chair,

Astronomy is humanity’s earliest form of space exploration, with our ancestors observing objects and phenomena in outer space since prehistoric times. Today, our ability to study the Universe using both space-based telescopes and ground-based observatories is crucial for deepening our understanding of the cosmos, and to shed light on some of humanity’s oldest and most fundamental questions, such as the origin of the Universe, and ultimately that of our own existence.

Chair,

Beyond its fundamental scientific value, astronomy plays a significant role in modern society by driving cutting-edge technological advancements of enormous economic impact, contributing to capacity building and inspiring new generations of scientists and engineers. Its importance extends to planetary defense, a topic of great relevance to the work of COPUOS, as astronomers and astronomical observatories play a key role in detecting and monitoring near earth objects, and assessing their risk of impact.

Chair,

The proliferation of satellites in LEO is an unprecedented challenge for ground based observatories and even some space telescopes, requiring prompt actions to safeguard the access to Dark and Quiet Skies. The astronomical community and astronomical organizations, including the EAS, have engaged extensively with space industry key players, international and national regulators, in an effort to work together towards technical solutions to mitigate negative effects of LEO satellites on astronomical activities and for the development of balanced regulations.

Chair,

The EAS greatly appreciates the work that delegations have been carrying out within the Group of Friends for Dark and Quiet Skies, and we strongly support the Conference Room

Paper (CRP.22) such group prepared. The document summarizes the challenges posed by the proliferation of LEO satellites to the operations of optical and radio telescopes, and describes key steps toward effective mitigations. We recognize the importance of this collaborative effort in addressing this issue for astronomy, science and for society. We furthermore support CRP 13, which outlines the effects of Unintended Electromagnetic Radiation from satellites on radio-telescopes, arguing for a multi-stakeholder approach to address the issue.

Chair,

In conclusion, the EAS reaffirms its commitment to working within COPUOS to develop innovative strategies for safeguarding dark and quiet skies. Preserving this shared resource is not only of great importance for science and society, but it is a responsibility we uphold for the benefit of future generations.

Distinguished delegates, Chair, Thank you for your attention.