

New Zealand, Item 15: Dark and quiet skies, astronomy and large constellations: addressing emerging issues and challenges

Sixty-second session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space – 3-14 February 2025

Chair, Distinguished Delegates

New Zealand recognises that satellites in low-Earth orbit can have unintended impacts on a range of uses of the night sky. We are grateful to the international astronomical community for their continued efforts in mitigating this important issue.

This is an important issue for New Zealand. Our universities have strengths in astronomical research and their work is being impacted by the growing number of satellites visible in the night sky. New Zealand is home to the Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve, one of the largest dark sky reserves in the world and the only reserve of its type in the Southern Hemisphere. The night sky is also culturally important for indigenous New Zealanders.

We acknowledge that satellite-enabled services and data have become critical, underpinning our daily lives. In 2023, a destructive cyclone damaged communication networks in impacted areas of New Zealand. Rescue and recovery efforts relied on connectivity provided by satellite communications constellations.

Addressing the impact of satellites on uses of the night sky while preserving the benefits of satellites to society, is an issue that requires international cooperation and coordination. New Zealand hopes that work under this agenda item will result in meaningful progress towards solutions that work for all affected groups, from astronomers and indigenous peoples through to commercial satellite operators.

To support this work, New Zealand hopes that a diverse range of perspectives will be heard on the issue. Experts from the astronomical community, the international space sector and indigenous communities will all have valuable insights as we look for a pragmatic way forward.

Thank you