

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR  
Scientific and Technical Subcommittee  
Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space  
Sixty-second session  
Vienna, 3 - 14 February 2025

Distinguished Delegates and Representatives,

It is with great pleasure to welcome you to the sixty-second session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

I would like to thank once more to the States members of the Committee for placing the trust in me as the Chair of this Subcommittee for the period of 2024-2025. I reassure you of my full commitment to advance the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

Distinguished Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to open my remarks by welcoming Djibouti and Latvia as the newest States members of the Committee. Its membership has now grown to 104 States. Furthermore, I would like to warmly welcome five new permanent observers, namely the African Astronomical Society, the Global Satellite Operators Association, the Outer Space Institute, the Space Data Association and Space Renaissance International, as the newest international organizations with permanent observer status with the Committee, which in total are now 56.

The continuous growth in membership of the Committee by States and space-related international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations clearly underscores the central role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies in expanding and strengthening international cooperation for peaceful, safe, and sustainable exploration and use of outer space. This positive trend is a testimony that space matters due to the critical role of space assets, space data and space technology applications as enablers of sustainable development.

Distinguished Delegates,

As we commence this session of the Subcommittee, I would like to underscore once more its relevance and importance. The Subcommittee has been instrumental in providing important guidance for keeping the outer space environment operationally stable and safe, through the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, the Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space, and the Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Space remains high on the political agenda. As acknowledged at the level of the heads of State and Governments at the 79<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, we are living through an age of increased access to and activities in outer space, and our expanding reliance on outer space systems demands urgent action.

As we advance our work amidst this challenging and ever complex outer space environment, I should like to emphasize that the outcome of the Subcommittee at this session and in the future can be impactful for the current and future generations, for all countries and stakeholders, and can expand the opportunities for the people and our planet as we work towards developing and implementing measures to further enhance the safety and sustainability of the exploration and use of outer space.

Distinguished Delegates,

Last year we marked the 55th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, placing humans on the surface of the Moon for the first time. This year is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apollo-Soyuz mission, the first crewed international space mission. It is also the 35th anniversary of the Hubble Space Telescope launch that revolutionized our understanding of the universe, providing breathtaking images and critical data about distant galaxies, stars, and planets. Hubble observations, free from the distortions caused by atmospheric interference, contributed to some of the key discoveries of our universe and paved the way for future space telescopes, such as the James Webb Space Telescope, which builds upon its legacy.

Coinciding with this anniversary, it is therefore even more timely to note that the Subcommittee agreed, starting this year, to consider the agenda item entitled “Dark and quiet skies, astronomy and large constellations: addressing emerging issues and challenges”. This is in view of the ever-increasing number of spacecrafts that were launched into orbit emitting radio signals and reflecting sunlight into astronomical telescopes or crossing their field of view, thereby degrading astronomical observations. I look forward to discussing these challenges under this item that will remain on the Subcommittee’s agenda until 2029.

Distinguished Delegates,

Another important achievement, led by Romania, is the follow-up of the recommendation by this Subcommittee last year to designate the year 2029 as the International Year of Asteroid Awareness and Planetary Defence. This is because of a once-in-a-life time opportunity when on 13 April 2029 asteroid 99942 Apophis will pass at a safe distance to Earth but, in astronomical terms, at a very close distance. It will be visible with the naked eye in many parts of this world. I’m pleased to note that the General Assembly on 4 December 2024 adopted the resolution 79/86 declaring 2029 the International Year of Asteroid Awareness and Planetary Defence. This will present an opportunity for a worldwide campaign to raise awareness regarding asteroids and to highlight the collaborative efforts being undertaken by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to mitigate the potential hazard posed by the impact of near-Earth objects on the Earth.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Subcommittee has a special and important task to consider many areas of space science and technology and their applications. In this context and in accordance with previous decisions by the Committee, I would like to recall the different working groups to be reconvened during this session: The Working Group of the Whole of the Subcommittee, the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space Activities, and the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities.

I also note with appreciation the continued work carried out by the international bodies whose establishment was facilitated by the Subcommittee, namely the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG), the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG), the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN), as well as the Space and Global Health Network, which last year agreed on the Long-term strategy on space and global health for the period 2025–2035.

Distinguished Delegates,

The critical role of space solutions, space data and technology cannot be underscored enough due to their transformative potential in meeting the economic and societal challenges of our time, and in achieving our commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The year 2025 is also the year of the mid-term review of the “Space2030” Agenda: space as a driver of sustainable development, which serves as the forward-looking strategy for reaffirming and strengthening the contribution of space activities and space tools to the achievement of global agendas and addressing long-term sustainable development concerns of humankind. I look forward to seeing the contributions by Member States and permanent observer organizations in identifying space solutions as well as capacity-building needs in implementing the Space2030 Agenda as the Committee conducts its mid-term review later this year.

Distinguished Delegates,

I’m also pleased to note that the Committee at its last session established the Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultation (ATLAC), to develop recommendations aimed at improving consultations related to lunar activities. I am honored by the trust the Committee placed in my colleague Hasan Abbas of Pakistan and myself to advance the work of ATLAC over the next three years. I also note that intersessional consultations on ATLAC will continue on the margins of this session of the Subcommittee.

Moreover, as agreed by the Committee and further reflected in the annual General Assembly resolution on the international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space – resolution 79/87, consultations on a proposal to hold a fourth United Nations Conference on the Peaceful Exploration of Outer Space (UNISPACE IV) in 2027 will be held during this session of the Subcommittee. This matter will be taken up under the agenda item 11, on “Future role and method of work of the Committee”, which will be addressed in the Working Group of the Whole.

I also would like to commend the Office for Outer Space Affairs for organizing the UN Space Sustainability Days ahead of this session on 30 and 31 January, proactively engaging States on pertinent matters related to space situational awareness and space traffic, including space surveillance and tracking and related information-sharing as key components to achieving the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

As Chair, I suggest that the Secretariat and MS of the Committee work on a roadmap to a potential UNISPACE IV including with more such sessions on critical topics.

Distinguished Delegates,

We have an honourable and important task before us: to deliver on the agenda, demonstrate that we are capable of rising to the challenge in a timely manner, and ensure that COPUOS becomes a dynamic platform for international cooperation that is fit to advance on critical matters for the benefit of humankind.

In my capacity as the Chair of the Subcommittee, I have confidence that our collaborative efforts will bring tangible results, advancing our work. I look forward to working with you all in a constructive and cooperative spirit.

Thank you.

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