

New Zealand, Item 5: Space Debris

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share key steps New Zealand has made toward addressing the important challenge of space debris.

In 2024, New Zealand was third in the world for the number of annual orbital launches, and we take our responsibilities as a launching state very seriously. We are committed to ensuring that space activity taking place in and from New Zealand is conducted safely, responsibly and sustainably.

New Zealand's regulatory regime is particularly important for ensuring our space activities are carried out sustainably. Authorisations of space activities from New Zealand are contingent on the provision of an orbital debris mitigation plan that meets international standards, among other requirements.

Requiring an orbital debris mitigation plan is intended to limit the proliferation of space debris by space objects launched from New Zealand. This reduces the risk of collisions in space and the potential for debris to cause damage in orbit and upon atmospheric re-entry.

New Zealand has work underway to amend our space regulations, including our orbital debris mitigation requirements. This will ensure that we continue to support international best practice in this area.

New Zealand also recognises the importance of space situational awareness for space sustainability. We undertake tracking of all space objects that launch from New Zealand, to monitor compliance with orbital debris mitigation requirements.

New Zealand has also been working to enable space debris remediation efforts, such as active debris removal, and satellite servicing operations that can extend the useful lifetime of satellites on orbit. We have established a regulatory pathway for active debris removal and other satellite servicing missions to launch from New Zealand. This ensures that these activities can proceed safely and securely, and in a manner that is

consistent with the UN space treaties. In 2024, an active debris removal technology demonstration launched from New Zealand.

Last year, New Zealand and the United Kingdom entered into a non-binding arrangement describing how the two countries would work together on joint active debris removal and on-orbit servicing missions. This includes by establishing principles that help to address legal, policy, and regulatory challenges. We hope that this work will help other countries as they look to enable novel space activities that will benefit the safety and sustainability of Earth orbit.

New Zealand has also funded research into active debris removal, focusing on developing advanced concepts for multi-active debris removal missions. The research has looked at engineering cost and policy requirements, for removing multiple space debris objects with a single servicing satellite on a single mission.

Thank you Chair.