

## ESA Statement under Agenda Item 9: Near-Earth Objects

Speakers: Holger Krag, Head of ESA Space Safety Programme

Back-up Speakers: Richard Moissl, Head of ESA Planetary Defence Office; Thomas Weissenberg, External Relations Officer; Jenni Tapio, External Relations Officer

Distinguished Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

The European Space Agency is proud to endorse and strongly support the 2029 International Year of Asteroid Awareness and Planetary Defence. This highlights the need for global cooperation in monitoring and preparing for potential asteroid impacts, ensuring the safety of our planet and its inhabitants.

ESA's commitment to this cause is exemplified by our ongoing efforts through our NEO Coordination Centre to monitor the recently discovered asteroid 2024 YR4. With more than 98% chance of safely passing Earth on 22 December 2032, the asteroid still poses a potential impact risk that cannot be entirely ruled out. This highlights the importance for vigilance and improved asteroid detection.

As our asteroid survey technology improves, thanks to advancements such as the deployment of the Flyeye telescope, we are likely to detect an increasing number of objects passing close to Earth that we would have missed in the past. This technological advancement is crucial for our ongoing efforts in planetary defence and aligns perfectly with the objectives of the 2029 International Year of Asteroid Awareness and Planetary Defence.

In support of these efforts, ESA recently launched the Hera mission, which will fly by Mars on the 12th of March. With a post-impact survey of the asteroid, Dimorphos, hit by NASA's DART impactor, this mission demonstrates our dedication to planetary defence and understanding of asteroids.

Additionally, the Rapid Apophis Mission for Space Safety (Ramses) has received permission to begin preparatory work for its next planetary defence mission. Ramses will rendezvous with



the asteroid (99942) Apophis and accompany it through its safe but exceptionally close flyby of Earth in April 2029.

ESA's commitment to planetary defence is further strengthened through our collaboration with other space agencies around the world, including our participation in the International Asteroid Warning Network and the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group. By working together, we pool our resources, share our expertise, and develop coordinated strategies to address the threat of asteroid impacts. This international cooperation is essential for enhancing our collective ability to detect, track, and mitigate potential hazards posed by near-Earth objects.

Let me conclude by underlining ESA's continued commitment to advancing our understanding of asteroids and planetary defence capabilities and collaborating with international partners for a safer future.

Thank you.