

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Kingdom of Thailand and GISTDA for hosting this United Nations Workshop on Space Law and their warm welcome. It is a great pleasure for me to be present here today and to be able to extend an additional word of welcome to you all on behalf of the European Space Agency.

I would also like to thank the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organisation for organising this prestigious event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The setting and format of this workshop promises to be the perfect forum for a fruitful exchange of views on the international and national legal framework of space activities and the challenges these might face nowadays, as well as for the exchange of experience with regard to international cooperation in the field of space activities.

Next year will not only mark the 50th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's first flight into outer space, but also the 50th anniversary of the permanent United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the 50th session of the Legal Subcommittee. This fact underlines the importance that has been attached from the very beginning of the space age to the development of the appropriate legal framework for outer space activities. That means half a century of work dedicated to the shaping of the system of rules and policies that govern the activities of States, international intergovernmental organisations and other entities relating to space, its exploration and use.

A number of factors - among them the breathtaking technological developments but also the political impetus building on the continuous maturation of these technological developments that fosters diversification, commercialisation and privatisation of space activities - have contributed to the development of space law in different phases or waves:

While the first phase – roughly the 1960s and 1970s - was characterised by the elaboration of binding international treaties treating primordial and general aspects of space activities, such as – to name just the most fundamental - the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, a subsequent phase has mainly been occupied by the adoption of special legal regimes addressing particular uses of outer space, such as the remote sensing guidelines. The current age of space law is marked by an ever-increasing number of actors that meet in more or less formal fora and contribute to keeping the body of space law in phase with the technological and political developments in a bottom-up approach.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is international workshops like this one, we have the privilege to attend here today that allow to increase and further spread the knowledge of the legal framework within which space activities are carried out and I think we all can but agree that research, training and education in space law are of paramount importance to national, regional and international efforts to further develop space activities. Workshops like this one allow for a deepened

understanding of existing international and national regulatory frameworks and the sharing of valuable experience in the development of national legislation.

Such an exchange fosters mutual understanding and contributes to the awareness of the benefits of international cooperation.

The European Space Agency was born out of the realisation that international - and in our case specifically regional - cooperation is the key to enlarging any given State's opportunities with regard to space activities, bringing more fantastic applications and results within reach.

Society reaps the benefits of this cooperation: Space applications form epochal achievements and it is becoming difficult to imagine a life without these modern amenities: From satellite communications to weather forecasting, from earth observation satellites monitoring climate change to global positioning satellites. Space exploration programmes contribute to enhancing our understanding of the universe.

Most of these achievements would be out of reach for any nation on its own. That is the reason why each year, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, reaffirms the importance of international cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me extend once again my appreciation to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Government of Thailand, the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization and the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency of Thailand for organising this workshop and for providing ESA with the opportunity to play a role.

I am looking forward to four days of interesting work and presentations with ample possibility for intellectual exchange and enriching discussions.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.