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**Committee on the Peaceful  
Uses of Outer Space**  
**Sixty-seventh session**  
Vienna, 19 - 28 June 2024  
Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*  
**Report of the Legal Subcommittee  
on its sixty-third session**

**Proposal for a Study Group on Perspectives for Space  
Traffic Management**

**Paper submitted by Germany**

The present conference room paper contains a proposal received from Germany. The proposal was reproduced in the form it was received.

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# Proposal for a Study Group on Perspectives for Space Traffic Management

Paper submitted by Germany

## I. Introduction

1. Since its 55<sup>th</sup> session in 2016, the Legal Subcommittee considers the agenda item “General exchange of views on the legal aspects of space traffic management”.<sup>1</sup> Many delegations have taken the floor over the years and expressed their views. In 2021, the Subcommittee “noted that the outer space environment was becoming increasingly complex and congested, owing to the growing number of objects in outer space, the diversification of actors in outer space and the increase in space activities, and that space traffic management could be considered in that context”.<sup>2</sup>

2. The need for and possible models of space traffic coordination and/or management have attracted the attention of various entities and organizations within the United Nations, international intergovernmental organisations outside the United Nations and non-governmental actors. Space traffic management was mentioned prominently in the Report of the Secretary-General “Our Common Agenda”<sup>3</sup> and the subsequent Policy Brief 7 “For All Humanity – the Future of Outer Space Governance”<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) have addressed the topic. Likewise, regional or national approaches can be observed around the world, and non-governmental entities pursued initiatives within fora such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

3. Such approaches serve the general purpose of informing and furthering the debate. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Committee and its two Subcommittees are the competent multilateral fora for global governance of outer space activities and for developing international space law.<sup>5</sup> Thus, they offer to the international community their expertise on the legal issues connected with the sustainable use of outer space, space traffic coordination and/or management. With that in mind, during the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Legal Subcommittee, Germany proposed the establishment of a Study Group on Perspectives for Space Traffic Management. The Study Group could serve as a means to enable and facilitate a substantive discussion within the Legal Subcommittee. It could present a report to the Legal Subcommittee to facilitate the identification of the benefits and scope of an international approach to space traffic management, for further reflection by the Legal Subcommittee under the respective agenda item.

## II. Rationale of establishing a Study Group on Perspectives for Space Traffic Management

4. In 2016, the Committee endorsed the thematic priorities of UNISPACE+50, the second of which is the “*Legal regime of outer space and global space governance: current and future perspectives*”. One objective under this thematic priority is to study “perspectives of space

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<sup>1</sup> As agreed upon during the 54<sup>th</sup> session in 2015 (cf. UN Doc. A/AC.105/1090, para. 221) and confirmed by the Committee during its 58<sup>th</sup> session (cf. UN Doc. A/70/20, para. 266).

<sup>2</sup> UN Doc. A/AC.105/1243, para. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. p. 62, 66.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. p. 14, 19.

<sup>5</sup> See in this regard UNGA Res. 73/6, para. 7.

traffic management” (objective c).<sup>6</sup> However, it was decided that the review of this topic (allocated to cluster 2) “would not commence until there has been further progress in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee”.<sup>7</sup> At the same time it was noted that “this cluster would also be important for the consideration of means of strengthening the Legal Subcommittee and procedural and institutional improvements and closer cooperation with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (see, under thematic priority 2, objectives (b) and (e))”, and that “the perspectives of space traffic management would be an overarching objective for consideration and possible establishment in the long-term perspective and leading towards 2030”.<sup>8</sup>

5. Noting that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 2019 successfully agreed on 21 Guidelines on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities which were adopted by COPUOS (A/74/20, para. 163 and Annex II), it seems to be consistent that the Legal Subcommittee commences its consideration and study of perspectives of space traffic management, in line with previous COPUOS decisions and the proposed timeline leading towards 2030. This would be based on the understanding that addressing the regulatory and legal aspects connected with the sustainable use of outer space, space traffic coordination and/or management at the Legal Subcommittee would not duplicate but complement the ongoing work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, including the work of its Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities.

### **III. Composition, scope and expected results**

6. The Study Group could gather a limited number of approximately 30 governmental experts from around the world with the relevant legal, technical and political expertise. The members of the study group could be appointed by the Chair of the Legal Subcommittee, upon nomination by Member States and in close coordination with the regional groups, on the basis of fair and equitable geographical representation and gender equality. Space-faring, non-space-faring and emerging space-faring nations as well as developing countries should be fairly represented.

7. The scope of the Study Group could be to compile and assess, within two years, relevant legal questions related to the sustainable use of outer space, space traffic coordination and/or management.

8. The Study Group could deliver a report to the Legal Subcommittee to present the facts, existing approaches and ideas, elements to consider when discussing space traffic coordination and/or management as well as possible perspectives for international space traffic management.

9. The Study Group is not meant to take any decisions or prescribe the possible results of potential further deliberations of the Committee and its Subcommittees. Its sole purpose is to discuss and elaborate possible ways forward to international space traffic management to put them before the Legal Subcommittee. It is intended as a think-tank-like approach to prepare a report that Member States can then build upon via established procedures.

### **IV. Proposed next steps**

10. Following the introduction of the proposal at the 63rd session of the Legal Subcommittee, at the margins of which an informal meeting was held to present this idea together with ideas brought forward by the delegations of Argentina and

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. UN Doc. A/71/20, p. 48f.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. UN Doc. A/AC.105/1169, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. UN Doc. A/AC.105/1169, p. 3.

of Japan, the Committee is invited to take note of the proposal for the establishment of a study group on perspectives for space traffic management and to welcome further consultations, with a view to revisiting this idea at the 64th session of the Legal Subcommittee in 2025.

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