

# **INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL UNION UNION ASTRONOMIQUE INTERNATIONALE**

**Statement by the International Astronomical Union  
to the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Committee  
on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)**

**Vienna, Austria, 25 August - 3 September 2021**

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me first take this opportunity to congratulate you for having been elected to chair this Committee. We are confident that your leadership will ensure that the committee will successfully execute its tasks. The IAU is particularly grateful for your continued support to the science of astronomy, especially at the present time, when space technological developments may impact negatively to its progress.

Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates and representatives,

At the 58<sup>th</sup> meeting of the STSC last April the delegations of Chile, Ethiopia, Jordan, Slovakia, Spain, together with the IAU as permanent observer, presented the CRP.17 entitled “Recommendations to Keep Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society”. The CRP was positively commented by 19 STSC delegations as well as by several COPUOS delegates during the current meeting. The conclusion of the discussion about the CRP.17 is at point 233 of the STSC Final Report which reads, among others:

233.

The Subcommittee encouraged the Office for Outer Space Affairs to engage with all relevant stakeholders, such as IAU and others, on the matter of dark and quiet skies [...] In that regard, the conference on dark and quiet skies for science and society to be organized by the Office jointly with the Government of Spain and IAU, planned to be held in October 2021, could provide input to a focused discussion on opportunities for international cooperation.

Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates and representatives,

I am happy to report that the UNOOSA, IAU and the Government of Spain, with the support of the US NOIR-Lab, have actively responded to the suggestion by the

STSC. The organization of the Conference “Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society – II” that will take place in La Palma on October 3 to 7, is very well advanced: the rich program is being finalized and will focus on the implementation of the recommendations for mitigating the negative impact of artificial interferences on astronomy which were part of the CRP.17.

The Conference will be in hybrid format: as of today we have more than 500 registered participants of which about 110 expressed the intention to be present in person at La Palma. The discussion at the Conference will benefit from the outcome of the workshop SATCON-2, supported by the US NSF and organized by NOIR-Lab last July. It will also address the question about the specific remits of COPUOS and ITU with respect to the constellations’ interference to radio astronomy.

All interested Delegations are invited to follow the Conference in streaming and we will very much appreciate it if they could urge the Space agencies and private companies of their Countries to be instrumental to the effectiveness of the conference by contributing their points of view.

At the time being, the outcome of the Conference will be presented to the 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the STSC next year under the generic STSC Agenda Item 4 – “Programme on Space Applications”.

At the 58<sup>th</sup> STSC, the Delegations of US, Japan and Canada presented the CRP.24 that was proposing to introduce a Single Agenda Item entitled *General Exchange of Views regarding Satellite System Effects upon Terrestrial-Based Astronomy*. The proposal was not approved because some Delegations asked for more time to study the matter: we are now proposing to the COPUOS Delegates to reconsider the possible introduction of such a Single Agenda Item for the 59<sup>th</sup> STSC: not only the Conference Report would be presented under a more coherent Agenda Item, but other Delegations would have a dedicated channel to present their point of view on such an important issue that concerns both the progress of science and the utilization of LEO orbit space.

Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates and representatives,

I am also happy to inform you that the IAU Executive Committee approved the issue of a Call for the establishment of an International Coordination Centre for the protection of the astronomical sky. The deadline for submitting proposals is September 10<sup>th</sup> and it is foreseen that the Centre will become operative by the beginning of 2022.

Finally, the IAU is delighted by the proposal by the SKA Observatory to be admitted as COPUOS permanent observer, joining the IAU, ESO and other Observers that have the promotion of astronomy among their remit. In particular, we are sure that the contribution of SKA-O to the current discussion on the protection of the dark and quiet skies will be instrumental to define suitable and acceptable International guidelines and agreements.

I thank you for your kind attention