

Statement NL Main Committee COPUOS – General Exchange of Views

Dear Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the floor.

1. Please allow me to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Director Ms. Di Pippo and the Office for Outer Space Affairs, for the preparation of this meeting of the COPUOS Main Committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few developments in the Netherlands, to reaffirm our priorities, and to look ahead.

2. Whether on earth or in outer space, the Netherlands is committed to the international rule of law. Hence, the Netherlands is signatory to all five core United Nations Treaties related to outer space. And accordingly, the Netherlands has established the Dutch Space Act.

3. The number of space activities in the Netherlands is growing structurally, resulting in an increase in the number of Dutch space operators and satellites under Dutch jurisdiction and control. Last year there were five licensees under the Dutch Space Act which operated eighteen Dutch satellites: ten Geostationary satellites and eight Low Earth Orbit satellites.

Based on several recent developments we believe the number of satellites under Dutch jurisdiction will increase significantly over the coming years.

4. In light of this, the Netherlands is particularly committed to a safe, secure and sustainable outer space environment. Therefore, the Netherlands is conducting an analysis of how the 21 LTS guidelines match up with our existing regulations and how our current Space Act could be adapted accordingly. The results of this analysis are foreseen this year and will also serve as input for our process to amend our Space Act at a later stage.

Mr. Chairman,

5. As outer space becomes increasingly more crowded, there is a need for reliable and sustainable space traffic management. Our economies, societies and security are more dependent on space infrastructure than ever before. And yet, our current regime of space traffic management is insufficient and unsustainable.

6. The Netherlands is convinced the international community must strive towards a legally binding instrument for space traffic management, negotiated here, within the framework of the UN. We need governance that enables safe and sustainable space-travel, while providing a global level playing field.

7. Moreover, in developing strategies and adequate regulatory frameworks, we need to include private and public stakeholders. Not only because the space sector is a global market. But because technologies advance rapidly, implicating that we should adopt a technology-open approach as much as possible.
8. A constructive dialogue has already taken place on a European level, between ESA, the European Commission and member states. And as the outcomes of this dialogue state: continued engagement with international organisations such as COPUOS will be key.
The Netherlands would therefore welcome a dedicated discussion on Space Traffic Management within this forum.
9. The ongoing deployment of thousands of satellites in the Low Earth Orbit does not only affect in-orbit operations. These satellite constellations have major influence on the visibility of the night skies for ground-based astronomy. Unfortunately, these adverse effects have not been adequately considered. This calls for an internationally agreed regulation, and in our view, this matter falls within the core remit of the UN COPUOS.
10. The Netherlands Delegation therefore considers that the concerns raised by the Conference Room Paper on “Dark and Quiet Skies”, presented by the International Astronomical Union, are very relevant and require attention at international level.

Mr. Chairman,

11. Gazing up at the night sky has given us astonishing insights and knowledge. But perhaps the most valued benefit of outer space activities are the contributions to sustainable development.
12. The Netherlands (with our European partners in the Copernicus programme) has been instrumental in the technical development of the TROPOMI instrument. Besides our Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute KNMI, our scientific community and various smaller companies developed applications in support of climate change research and air quality management.
13. The Netherlands supports the use of satellite data for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, the Netherlands funded the Geodata for Agriculture and Water Facility with € 60 mln, which aims to support 4,5 million smallholder food producers with satellite based information services by 2023. At the end of 2020 we have directly reached more than 1,1 million smallholders. More public investment is needed, however, in order to further scale existing information services that help smallholders increase their productivity in an environmentally

sustainable manner and ensures efficient use of water. The Netherlands cooperates closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in making data on water productivity in agriculture available.

14. Earlier this year we have also released a grant with the topic: satellite data on behalf of climate mitigation and adaptation. The goal is to support the development of satellite based services that have a direct impact on the Netherlands and help achieve the 1,5 degree target of the Paris climate accord. Six organisations have been granted for the feasibility phase and the innovations range from measuring and monitoring of carbon stock in soil; the use of satellite based soil moisture information for water management; to the use of agro forestry for increasing carbon storage.

15. Whether on earth or in outer space, there is a need for sustainable governance of resources. As to the working group on Space Resources, the Netherlands welcomes the establishment of this working group, and would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Chair, Mr Andrzej Misztal of Poland, and vice-Chair, Mr Steven Freeland of Australia on their appointment.
16. The Netherlands is confident that the Committee will be able to agree on a mandate for this working group. In the view of the Netherlands, this mandate should be feasible, and as concrete as possible. In that regard, the Netherlands would like to take this opportunity to refer to the Building Blocks of the The Hague International Space Resources Governance Working Group, as submitted to the Committee by the Governments of Luxembourg and the Netherlands [document no. A/AC.105/C.2/L.315 of 2 March 2020]. Also, the Netherlands attaches great importance to the independent input of all stakeholders involved in Space Resources Activities. With that, Mr. Chairman, the Netherlands looks forward to a constructive session.

17. As space is now an indispensable part in our daily lives and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the global community needs clear rules and a forum where dialogue is possible to develop a global consensus. We believe COPUOS and UNOOSA should continue to play an important role in this context and the Netherlands will continue to support the activities in this arena.

Thank you for your attention.