



Statement by Viktoriya Kuvshynnykova, Deputy Director-General of the International Organizations DG of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for the UNGA Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on Agenda item 51 “International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space” (November 2020)

Mr. Chairperson,

This year’s exceptional circumstances have enabled UN Member States to review existing mechanisms for international cooperation, including in the field of outer space exploration.

While the external environment is constantly changing due to lockdowns and logistical restrictions, the space activities continue to evolve. Therefore, there remains a need for an all-inclusive dialogue and meaningful cooperation among Member States within the framework of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

Ukraine strongly believes that COPUOS has always been a unique platform for triggering international cooperation in space explorations at the global scale. In the times of COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent organizational barriers, it becomes even more vital for international community to ensure continuity in the shaping of international standards for space activities. We believe that the Committee should play a central role in the relevant decision-making process.

Against this backdrop, it is regrettable that the Committee was not able to hold its meeting in Vienna in September 2020, as it was earlier planned. In the meantime, Ukraine supports the alternative approach to ensure the continuity of the activities of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies by preparing formal written procedures. We proceed from understanding that those measures for decision-making are exceptional in mitigating the difficulties imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic and do not constitute a precedent for future processes.

Ukraine reiterates that despite whatever barriers the world faces throughout this year, there should never be a room for legitimizing dialogue with the individuals, businesses and officials from state-aggressors or those states, which violate international law, and are subjects to the international sanctions.

We remind in this regard that due to the illegal occupation of Crimea Ukraine has lost control of the space facilities located on the peninsula, including the NIP-16 facility.

Built in 1960th for tracking space probes, this facility was managed until 2014 by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine with clear and transparent tasking in full conformity with the principles of peaceful use of the outer space. It speaks volumes that now the tracking facility is controlled by the Russian Ministry of Defence and is reportedly planned to be illegally integrated into Russia's network already in 2020.

We consider this illegal step to be another evidence of strengthening military footprint in the Russian policies on both occupied Crimea and the outer space. As Russia considers outer space as a strategic region to enhance its military capabilities on earth, the illegally occupied Crimea has already been turned into a huge military base endangering the entire Black sea region. Moreover, Russia continues to militarise and centralise its policies on outer space with an emphasis on developing relevant military capabilities.

Notwithstanding the Russian aggression, Ukraine anticipates positive developments in the space domain on a national level. Restoring capabilities of the rocket-and-space complex is one of the main priorities for Ukraine. To achieve this goal, we continue to foster international cooperation within a number of multilateral projects, such as Antares and Vega.

All international space activities of Ukraine are being carried out in accordance with the national legislation, in particular the National Space Program, and our international obligations. The Government of Ukraine takes proactive steps to enhance the efficiency of space capacities for solution of urgent tasks in economic, environmental, cultural, informational, educational, scientific and social areas, providing national security and protection of geopolitical interests of the state. These priority tasks are determined by the Concept of the State Space Policy Realization for the period until 2032

We deem it necessary for the international community to start working on a new comprehensive legally binding document to combine existing five outer space treaties and to include additional provisions to take into account the current trends of outer space activities.