

Fifty-fourth Session of the
UN COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
High-level segment – Vienna, 1 June, 2011

**Statement by Mr. Tamás Iván Kovács, Head of the Hungarian Delegation,
on behalf of the European Union**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Candidate Countries Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro and Turkey, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and the potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as Armenia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine associate themselves with this statement.

First of all, the EU wishes to express condolences and deepest sympathy to the people and the government of Japan, following the devastating earthquake and tsunami only a few months ago.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, not only for chairing the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and this high-level segment of the COPUOS Session, but also for your 30th anniversary of your scientific flight in outer space. The EU highly appreciates the hard preparatory work for this high-level meeting and the accompanying exhibition. We express our thanks to the Director of OOSA, Ms. Mazlan Othman and her staff. We are convinced that this exhibition yields a proper cross-section of the achievement of space activity in the past decades.

We are very honoured to attend this prestigious event, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the first human spaceflight, as well as the likewise 50th anniversary of the first session of COPUOS as a standing Committee of the United Nations. Yuri Gagarin's spaceflight was undoubtedly a milestone in human history. Since then more than 500 people from dozens of countries followed him in outer space. What in the 1960s was a unique and extraordinary event, by now became an almost everyday reality – in the past decade thanks to the International Space Station human beings were and are continuously present in outer space. For nearly two decades

¹ Croatia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

the human spaceflight was the privilege of only two nations, but then some citizens of the European Union followed them. The first Europeans flew in outer space through international cooperation and today the European Space Agency coordinates national efforts. The European Astronaut Corps is currently composed of 14 members, being trained in the European Astronaut Centre. During the last three decades about forty Europeans worked for shorter or longer time on-board of different space vehicles. Europe is involved as a firm partner in the International Space Station programme, the European Space Agency built its own laboratory, attached to the ISS, regularly sends cargo ships there and not long ago a European commanded the Station.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

At this commemorative segment of the COPUOS session, in the presence of the distinguished representatives of the UN Member States including those states which are not members of the Committee, we also celebrate the 50th anniversary of establishing COPUOS as a permanent body of the United Nations. Based on the pioneering work of an ad hoc committee on the peaceful uses of outer space, in 1961, the General Assembly stated that the United Nations should provide a focal point for international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, and requested the Committee to take this responsibility. Now, after half a century we can affirm that COPUOS has fulfilled the task, specified by the General Assembly 50 years ago. The first permanent Committee had only 24 member states – I am proud to say that 11 Member States of the today's European Union were among them – and since then it has grown to 70 members, making COPUOS one of the largest Committees of the United Nations and clearly demonstrating the importance of space activity not only for the space faring nations but also for the developing countries.

In the first two decades of its activity COPUOS laid down a firm legal basis for all forms of space activities, namely the five treaties, the Outer Space Treaty, the Rescue Agreement, the Liability Convention, the Registration Convention and the Moon Agreement. It is important to note that the Outer Space Treaty has been ratified up to now by more than 100 countries. Additionally, the Committee has also concluded five sets of legal principles which have been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

In the past decades significant changes occurred in the structure and content of the space endeavour. New forms of activities, new technologies and new participating entities, increased international co-operation, privatisation and commercialisation of space activities as well as new

problems and threats, not foreseen 50 years ago, appeared in the space activity which led COPUOS to develop concepts of the “Launching State” or registration practices, Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and Nuclear Power Sources application in Outer Space, which have all been endorsed by General Assembly resolutions.

The European Union feels that now is the time to address these new challenges and has a proposal for a new Code of Conduct for outer space activities. The purpose of the Code of Conduct would be to enhance the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities for all. It includes transparency and confidence-building measures and reflects a comprehensive approach to safety and security in outer space guided by the following principles: freedom for all to use outer space for peaceful purposes, preservation of the security and integrity of space objects in orbit and due consideration for the legitimate security and defence interests of States. The EU is in the process of consulting with as many countries as possible this proposal and gathering their views.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Of the recent activities of COPUOS we would like to highlight several milestones. As a follow-up of the third UNISPACE Conference the International Committee on GNSS (ICG) has been established to promote the use of GNSS infrastructure on a global basis and to facilitate exchange of information. Also an important follow-up of the UNISPACE III Conference was the establishment of the UN-SPIDER network in order to ensure that all countries and international and regional organizations have access to all types of space based-information and to develop the capacity to use the full disaster management cycle. Numerous natural disasters occurring in countries all over the globe dramatically show the need for improving the disaster management cycle. The UN-SPIDER program joined the other international main instruments in the Earth monitoring, such as the Group on Earth Observations (GEOS) the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and the Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters also known as the International Charter “Space and Major Disasters”.

We are confident that current works within COPUOS, notably on the theme of the Long-Term Sustainability of Space activities and associated legal, economical and political issues, will constitute further important achievements and contributions from COPUOS to the general framework of the peaceful uses of outer space.

To conclude my statement, I underline the support of the European Union to the “Declaration” of this meeting. The EU expresses its appreciation on the adoption of this unique document by the distinguished delegations. Welcoming once more this commemorative segment of COPUOS on the occasion of the two important anniversaries, we ensure you of the support of the EU and wish COPUOS further successes during this session, as well as for the future.

Thank you for your attention.

Thank you Mr. Chairman