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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: Events and activities during the Spanish presidency
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached a note from the Presidency on “Events and activities during the Spanish presidency” with a view to the AOB item at the meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 8 December 2023.

Events and activities during the Spanish presidency

Information communicated by the presidency

During the semester of the Spanish presidency of the Council of the European Union, a series of Space events have been organised, most of them concentrated in the week from 6 to 10 November in Seville.

The Informal Ministerial Meeting on Competitiveness (Space)

During this space week in Seville, several high-level events took place, with two continents involved and with the global participation of thousands of in-person and remote attendants. It began with the **Informal Meeting of EU Space Ministers**, where strategic autonomy and resilience in the space field was discussed, a topic positively received by the delegations, who held homogeneous opinions and points of view on the topics discussed. As a result of this fruitful debate, the following messages are worth highlighting: 1) the need to protect space infrastructures and preserve the peaceful and responsible use of space; 2) the importance of space data for the economy and the fight against climate change; 3) the need for an increase in investments in research and innovation, support for SMEs and other actors in the New Space; 4) interest in the coming European Commission's proposal for a space law, scheduled for the first quarter of 2024, that will address resilience, security and sustainability, and the importance of such a law not undermining the competitiveness of European industry; 5) the need to recover the European autonomy in terms of access to space and to propose a long-term solution, and 6) the guarantee of access to critical technologies.

EU-ESA Joint informal meeting at ministerial level

Following the informal meeting of ministers of the EU, an EU-ESA Joint Informal Meeting took place. In this case ministers had the opportunity to share their views on the green and sustainable use of space and how space activities contribute to the green transition strengthening resilience to climate change, and the key contribution of the Copernicus programme. A clear sign of political support for Copernicus was launched as well as the support for the space data economy initiative, in which the European Commission, EUSPA and ESA play an important role. Furthermore, the effort of space industry in reduction of emissions was recognised. Ministers highlighted the positive effects of competitive and innovative contracting focused on service provision and the implications and anchor client strategy on contracting to increase demand from institutional actors.

In this framework, the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the German Presidency of the ESA Council have presented a joint declaration, which was well-received by the rest of the delegations.

High Level Dialogue EU-CELAC on space

A high-level dialogue on the EU-CELAC space took place. In this initiative, Spain plays a relevant role as a bridge between both regions. Ministers discussed about the convenience of giving impetus to mutual partnership commitments, in view of the high interest of both actors in creating stable cooperation and the common objective to share an economic area in the space field.

Space Week

In this occasion, the Space Week organized by the European Commission and EUSPA took also place in Sevilla, in collaboration with the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It was held from 7 to 9 November. This forum welcomed all actors interested in the present and future of the EU Space Programme components.

It is worth highlighting the commitment of Spanish space agents, both public institutions and industry; in particular the Spanish Space Agency, which is expected to play a fundamental role at national, European and global levels in the coming years.

Dark and Quiet Skies workshop

A workshop on Dark and Quiet Skies was held in Brussels at the beginning of the Spanish presidency. During this event, relevant experts had the opportunity to discuss the negative effect of satellites on astronomical observations due to light and radio-electric pollution, the current situation and the challenges faced by astronomers in this respect. The event showed the work carried out in the United Nations under the committee for the peaceful use of outer space (COPUOS), and the way in which this problem is being addressed in the European Union, in particular how the European Commission is setting specific requirements to minimise this negative effect.
