



Paris, 30 May 2024

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

Report by the Director General on the 11th Space Council

Summary

With the 11th Space Council and its associated events on 22 and 23 May 2024 in Brussels, ESA decisively reaffirmed its position in chartering Europe's future in space. It presented itself as the trusted and preferred space partner of the EU, ready to engage with the incoming European Parliament (EP) legislature and the new College of Commissioners. The 20-year long cooperation between ESA and the EU under the Framework Agreement was celebrated and reaffirmed as the basis for a strong European future in space.

In the Space Council and the preceding ESA Council at Ministerial level meeting on 23 May 2024, ESA demonstrated how its mechanisms support the strengthening, diversification and expansion of the European space sector and its impact on the competitiveness of Europe as a whole. The immediate implementation of the decisions from the ESA Council at Ministerial level of 6 November 2023 in Seville as the setting up of competitive challenges and service-oriented contracts, demonstrated to the Ministers the agile and transforming powers of ESA.

At the associated events in Brussels on 22 May 2024, with the involvement of the German ESA Chairship and the Belgian EU Council Presidency, ESA further proofed its leadership in key areas of space for Europe's future: With the signature of the Zero Debris Charter by twelve ESA Member, Associated and Cooperating States, it is demonstrated that the Agency is at the global forefront of creating concrete, useful and attractive technical solutions for space sustainability, stressing that the Agency wants to be a model organisation by applying

this Charter and to provide European industry with such solutions for space sustainability in synergy with the European Space Law in preparation. With the signature of the space segment contract for Vigil, preceded and celebrated at this occasion, ESA takes a key step to operational space weather monitoring. With the signature of the LEO Cargo Return Service contracts, ESA positions Europe in the commercialisation of the Low Earth Orbit while modernising its procurement fitting to the new era of the space economy. And with the signature of the amendment to the EU-ESA Security Agreement, ESA takes another step in being established as a trusted partner for the EU and its Member States in the crucial field of space security. A particular highlight was the presentation of the two astronauts newly assigned for ISS-missions, who were connected live from Houston.

The 11th Space Council took place in the year of the 20th anniversary of the entering into force of the ESA-EU Framework Agreement. This agreement accelerated already established cooperation between the two organisations, leading to the successful flagship programmes as Copernicus and Galileo and now Secure Connectivity, as well as countless specific cooperative activities. ESA looks forward to continuing cooperation with the EU as an indispensable, competent partner for developing and implementing Europe's ambitions in space.

1. The ESA Council Resolution and the EU Council Conclusions – guidance for strengthening Europe's competitiveness through space

The 11th Space Council, which took place on 23 May 2024 in Brussels was able to build on informal meetings of the two Councils at Toulouse in February 2022 and at Seville in November 2023, which had followed the 10th Space Council in November 2020 under the French/Portuguese Chairship of the ESA Council at Ministerial level and the German Presidency of the EU Council. While the 10th Space Council had to be held in virtual format due to the Covid crisis, the 11th Space Council was held in presence in the format foreseen in the ESA-EU Framework Agreement comprising concomitant and joint meetings of the two Councils with the EU Council meeting first, then the ESA Council at Ministerial level following and the Joint Meeting of the two Councils completing the 11th Space Council.

The Space Council was prepared by a "Quadrige" of representatives from the two Presidencies and the two Executives, which met once, on 23 January 2024, also on political level. The process of preparation saw continuous interaction with the delegate bodies of ESA (through a dedicated Council Working Group) and EU (Space Working Party). The output of the 11th Space Council were text-identical documents as ESA Council Resolution and EU Council Conclusions, adopted at respective preceding meetings. The ESA Council Resolution is entitled "Resolution on Strengthening Europe's competitiveness through space" (ESA/C-M(2024)1) and has been made publicly available.

The theme of the 11th Space Council was "Strengthening Europe's Competitiveness through Space". Emerging from the deliberations in the preparatory bodies, the theme, as elaborated in the Resolution/Conclusions, developed two aspects: the decisive role of space to strengthen Europe's general competitiveness on the one hand and the importance to strengthen the European space industry and the European space sector as a whole in order to achieve the overarching goal. Accordingly, the Resolution/Conclusions focused on Space

contribution to European competitiveness and societal challenges, Boosting the competitiveness of the European space sector and Space as a backbone for European global action. The 11th Space Council thus also extended the theme of Establishing key principles for the global space economy from the 10th Space Council of 2020. With its Resolution/Conclusions, the 11th Space Council took up the current challenges for the space sector and translated them into clear visions for implementing the full potential of space for Europe.

In the preparatory phase to the Space Council, ESA held consultations with the European space industrial sector, in order to provide it with the opportunity to express needs and positions regarding the Space Council theme. Immediately following the Space Council, Eurospace issued a position paper on establishing an industrial strategy for space on the European level, for which the Space Council configuration would be the appropriate forum.

In his address to the Joint Meeting of the two Councils, the Director General summarized the challenges regarding competitiveness as following: Firstly, Europe needs to increase investment in space through public sources. The next opportunities will arise at CM25 and CM28. Secondly, we must transform Europe's space sector, making it faster, more agile and less risk averse. Thirdly, we must avoid fragmentation, aligning the various European space actors according to their roles and mandates.

Preceding the Space Council, the ESA CWG and Council had laid out at the final meetings in April 2024 that they shared the understanding that Art. 1 of the Resolution/Conclusions addresses the inclusive access of EU and ESA Member States to different phases of existing and future programmes in accordance with the rules, institutional settings and operational frameworks of these programmes and organizations, and that in Art. 15 it is the EU, ESA and their Member States that continue to work together, in line with their respective competences.

2. Actions already foreseen or initiated as result from the Space Council

The Director General is determined to implement the guidance from the Space Council Resolution/Conclusions in a structured way and particularly for the preparation of CM25/CM28 and the development of the "ESA 2040" Strategy. He will also take into account the statements of the Member States' delegations at the orientation debate during the Joint Meeting of the Councils, as for example the repeated call for intensification of education and STEM promotion as well as attracting and keeping talents. Such a structured and comprehensive approach is already applied for the implementation of the decisions taken at the Seville Council at Ministerial level in November 2023. For this, the Director General had presented to the ESA Council at Ministerial level during the 11th Space Council an information document containing the "Status Report on the implementation of the Resolution on Lifting Europe's Ambitions for a Green and Sustainable Future, Access to Space and Space Exploration" (ESA/C-M(2024)2).

The Space Council Resolution provisions have already been influencing activities in and by ESA. To be mentioned is the effort in updating the European Space Standardisation

Committee's (ECSS) work in order to strengthen European industry internally and also its competitiveness abroad (Art. 13 of the Resolution). As an element to this, a risk management scheme balancing risks and requirements, amongst others for the tailored application of standards in space programmes, is envisioned for enhancing programme efficiency as well as industrial competitiveness and investments (Art. 8 of the Resolution). Further action is already taken (in respect to Art. 14 of the Resolution) to support industry in developing international markets. Visits to key cooperation partners have been conducted by ESA during the past year inter alia to India, Japan, Mexico or the UAE. Programmatic and commercial partnership and cooperation is also a key rationale for the upcoming cooperation between ESA and the newly established African Space Agency.

In its Art. 4, the Resolution emphasises “that space-based solutions must therefore be even more strongly integrated into non-space sectors, and vice versa”. As part of the development of the Accelerators, and through ESA programmes such as FutureEO, BASS (ESA Business Applications and Space Solutions) or CSS (Civil Security from Space), the Agency continues to develop strategic partnerships and cooperation projects with key actors of non-space sectors to put space-based solutions at the service of Europe's competitiveness, in particular to support a greener and more resilient European economy. ESA also appreciates that the overarching goal to foster a more user-driven space sector was reaffirmed as a joint ambition of ESA and the EU. In this respect, ESA and the European Commission are working on the implementation of their Collaborative Arrangement, signed in April 2024 that will pave the way for a reinforced cooperation to better connect stakeholders across relevant communities and leverage their complementary capabilities and competence, notably, in financing, innovation and user engagement.

The Resolution also welcomes, in its Art. 6, “that increased service procurement promotes the transfer of responsibility and authority for mission design and implementation to private enterprises, where appropriate”. Competitiveness being at the core of ESA Mandate as laid out in Art. VII 1b of the Convention, the current profitability challenges of the European space industry are given particular attention with intensified dialogue with all categories of suppliers. Building on a long-standing experience of equitable and transparent public procurement practice and permanent dialogue with industry the current dialogue expands further on tailored procurement methods, including risk sharing schemes, partnership agreements and service procurement where appropriate. This is demonstrated in the recent example of IOS, LEO Cargo Return Service, SCOUT Missions, and soon the European Launch Challenge

3. Associated activities to the Space Council and media coverage

The 11th Space Council provided an outstanding opportunity to showcase current, topical ESA achievements to the Ministers and the institutions involved in the Space Council as well as to the media. Implementing this, ESA conducted several side events in Brussels on 22 May 2024, the day before the Space Council. They followed a visit by delegates to the ‘Planet Happiness’ exhibition in the Dynasty Palace. These events were organised in coordination with both the German Chairship of ESA's Council at Ministerial level and the

Belgian EU Council Presidency at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts with delegates, invited guests and media. Throughout all events of 22 and 23 May 2024 and their preparatory phase, the Belgian delegation provided outstanding hospitality through an extremely professional and dedicated team.

The community led Zero Debris Charter received its first signatures from the ESA Director General and representatives of 12 Member, Associated and Cooperating States (here in alphabetical order: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom). By signing this document, the world's most ambitious vision on space debris mitigation and remediation to-date, Ministers, agency heads and other senior space leaders demonstrated their unwavering commitment to the long-term sustainability of space activities. On 6 June 2024, the Charter will receive its first non-governmental signatures at the ILA Berlin Air Show. So far, more than 100 entities have committed to sign the Charter. The strong support given to the Charter by actors from all around the world demonstrates Europe's global leadership in driving concrete and attractive technical developments that ensure space safety and sustainability while strengthening industrial competitiveness.

A declaration celebrating the concluding of the Vigil mission space segment contract was signed by the UK Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation, the ESA Director General, and Airbus Defence and Space (the prime contractor). From its unique vantage point in deep space, Vigil will greatly improve our early warning of severe space weather events that may cause disruption on Earth. Vigil will provide essential time required to respond, to reduce astronaut health risks and prevent damage to critical infrastructure on Earth and in space.

The Director General signed the contracts for Phase 1 of the LEO Cargo Return Service (Service Development and Demonstration Mission) with the representatives of two companies: The Exploration Company and Thales Alenia Space. For the duration of two years the companies will work to advance the development of their respective cargo return vehicle, as well as associated service and ground infrastructure, to a level compatible with the execution of a demonstration mission to the International Space Station by 2030. The speed with which these contracts were awarded in the short period since the Seville Council at Ministerial level was widely appreciated.

The first two career astronauts of the 2022 class assigned to long duration missions, were also presented to the public. The announcement was made by ESA Director General with a in remote live connection to Houston where Sophie Adenot and Raphaël Liégeois were located. The Belgian Secretary of State and the Head of the French Space Agency also exchanged, on stage, with the two astronauts. Key media from both countries had opportunities to pre-interview the astronauts and an extensive media package was shared to other media outlets, in advance and under embargo, to provide journalists with exclusive photos and videos of the two astronauts. The ceremony also was live streamed on ESA web TV in order to offer the possibility to a broader audience to access the content.

Following the ESA side events, kindly hosted and supported in its organisation by the Belgian delegation, joint events were held. First, the European Ultra Space Challenge announcement of winners took place. The Challenge, a joint initiative of the Belgian

Presidency of the EU and of the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office, with the support of the European Commission, the European Space Agency (represented by the Head of the European Astronaut Centre) and Eurospace, is a competition intended to unleash creativity for tomorrow's EU space sector. It is the opportunity for Belgian secondary students and the EU Business and Research Sector to envision the possibilities of the European Space sector in an era defined by the imperative for sustainable innovation.

Closing the associated activities, was a Celebration of the 20th anniversary of the entering into force of the ESA-EU Framework Agreement in 2004. It was held in co-organisation by the Quadriga partners and moderated by the Belgian host. While joint cooperation between the two organisations was already conducted before the Framework Agreement, most notably in GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) what then became Copernicus, the Agreement since then provides the frame for successful and ever-expanding cooperation between the two partners. Formally reconfirmed by the EU in November 2009 following the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union succeeded to all agreements concluded and all commitments made by the European Community with ESA. The celebration event comprised a dialog with the political level of the Quadriga and expressed their satisfaction with the concrete results of the cooperation based on the Framework Agreement. It also highlighted the opportunity the Member States of both ESA and EU possess through the Space Councils to coordinate and develop space policies for Europe.

In a closed ceremony before the public side events, an amendment to the EU-ESA Security Agreement was signed. This Agreement between the European Space Agency and the European Union on the security and exchange of classified information ("ESA-EU Sol Agreement") originally entered into force in 2008 and is the cornerstone upon which ESA and the EU collaborate on security-critical space programmes (Galileo, Copernicus, IRIS²) enabling us to work together to strengthen and protect European capabilities in space. The Agreement recognizes the equivalence of the applicable rules and regulations for the protection of classified information applied in the Union and in ESA and foresees that the Parties provide mutual assistance with regard to the security of classified information subject to the Agreement and matters of common security interest. As a result of the signature of the ESA-EU Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA) in 2021, the parties agreed to amend the ESA-EU Sol Agreement. The most significant update to the Agreement is on the Creation of EU Classified Information by ESA. The closed signature took place on 22 May 2024 with the Head of the ESA Security Office and the Director-General for Resource Management at the European External Action Service. With this signature, ESA takes another step as a trusted partner for the EU and its Member States in the crucial field of space security.

The Director General furthermore took the opportunity to present to the Ministers during the ESA Council meeting at Ministerial level on 23 May 2024 new images and derived scientific results from Euclid.

Media engagement was significant, due in part to a series of embargo releases and digital info kits sent by ESA Communication to select European and international media, and to extensive media outreach actions and preliminary briefings. The Communication

Department also ensured highlight interview opportunities. Overall, the ESA Council at Ministerial level and the joint meeting of the two Councils on 23 May 2024 did extremely well in media coverage, emphasizing significant agreements and policy discussions. ESA was mentioned in 1,564 articles across all Member States, with a potential reach of 600 million exposures and a 74% share of voice. Key coverage highlights from across European media included the LEO Cargo Return Service contract, the announcement of the two new astronaut mission assignments and the Zero Debris Charter. The release of new Euclid mission images also garnered significant global attention.

4. ESA's expectations following the Space Council

Conducting a Space Council in a formal setting with a substantive and formal output was a desire of both the Member States and the Director General. This is a sign that ESA is fully committed to reinforce the strategic partnership on eye-level with the EU and its institutions for the benefit of Europe comprising ESA, EU and their Member States, their respective policies, European industry and citizens.

The positive input the Ministers gave during the meetings of the 11th Space Council encourages to further proceed on this path and in this format. Notably the inclusive preparatory process in the “Quadrige” setup with close interaction with the Member States in the bodies of ESA and the EU has proved to reach important and substantive results. The ESA-EU Framework Agreement, therefore, should continue to be the setting for the continued interaction between the two organisations as Art. 16 of the Resolution states.

While proceeding on the paths to CM25 on the one side and the next MFF on the other side, this coordination should focus on consistent and complementary programme proposals and strengthening coherence in the setting of rules and norms, which are shaping space activities.

Inside ESA, the Director General will carefully reflect the results from the 11th Space Council in the preparation of CM25/CM28 and the development of the “ESA 2040” Strategy requested by Ministers at the CM in Seville. Further concrete implementation steps will be presented in the preparatory process for CM25.