



“Outer Space: A New Frontier of the Common Good”

A high-level roundtable co-organised by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) together with the Caritas in Veritate Foundation

9 June 2026 (13h00-14h30)*

Venue: *COMECE, 19 Square de Meeûs, 1050 Brussels*

Programme:

- 13h00-13h10:** **Welcome remarks: Rev. Fr Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto,**
COMECE General Secretary
- Opening remarks: H.E. Archbishop Ettore Balestrero,** Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva and President of the Caritas in Veritate Foundation
- 13h10-13h40:** **Presentation of the publication “Outer Space and Humanity at a Crossroads: Reflections on a New Frontier of the Common Good”:**
- Prof. Dominique Lambert,** University of Namur, Physicist and Philosopher, Member of the Royal Academy of Belgium
- Keynote speech: Ms Lorena Boix Alonso,** Deputy Director-General, DG Defence, Industry and Space, European Commission
- 13h40-14h00:** **Responses from:**
- Ms Maria-Gabriella Sarah,** Expert in Strategy , Impact and partnerships at the Joint Research Centers of the European Union, *seconded* by the European Space Agency
- Mr Jean-Pol Poncelet,** former Minister of Defence of Belgium
- Prof. Annick Castiaux,** Rector of the University of Namur
- 14h00-14h30:** **Q/A session**
Moderator:
H.E. Mr Thomas Antoine, Honorary Ambassador of Belgium

**A light lunch will be served between 12.30 and 13.00.*

Concept Note

From time immemorial, the starry skies and the immensity of the universe have always been a source of contemplation, admiration and inspiration for humanity. Once the exclusive domain of a few States, outer space has become increasingly accessible to a wider range of public and private stakeholders.

Today, outer space has ever-growing strategic importance and implications for life on Earth. Satellites enable, *inter alia*, communication links within our inter-connected world; observation of climatic and ecological patterns, which can also be vital to prevent natural disasters; security monitoring of breaches to peace and compliance with disarmament and non-proliferation treaties; as well as geospatial positioning for transportation networks. Not far off in the future, outer space could likewise enable the exploitation of rare minerals, new sources of energy, and environments suitable for data mining.

These developments generate immense societal benefits. At the same time, there are critical questions about sustainability and security: congestion of low-earth orbits, growing space debris, and militarization of outer space are among the mounting challenges. Given humanity's dependence on space, such challenges call for renewed ethical reflections on outer space governance which should be guided by collective responsibility and be at the service of humanity for present and future generations.

It becomes increasingly urgent to restore trust, create confidence, and recommit to the use and exploration of space as a common good and for peaceful uses only. In this context, the European Union plays a growing role in space governance, guided by its commitment to multilateralism and to a rules-based international order. With its current initiatives, including the proposed EU Space Act, an upcoming 'European Space Shield', and with expanding investment in space capabilities, the EU aims to strengthen security, safety, resilience and sustainability in outer space.

At the same time, European programmes such as Galileo (Navigation) and Copernicus (Earth Observation) — and emerging initiatives like the IRIS² secure connectivity constellation — demonstrate how space assets can successfully be oriented towards the public interest, from environmental monitoring to secure communications. These developments also raise important questions about how Europe can balance competitiveness, innovation, security and sustainability while ensuring that space remains a shared domain serving the common good.

The objective of this high-level roundtable is therefore to connect policy, ethics, law, and technology experts around a shared vision of outer space as a new frontier of the common good, thus contributing to ongoing discussions on space security and sustainability.

Lastly, the event will also be the occasion to present a recent publication by the Caritas in Veritate Foundation entitled "*Outer Space and Humanity at a Crossroads: Reflections on a New Frontier of the Common Good*". Considering how ethical principles should guide our human presence and activities in outer space, the publication also features a Preface by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, and an Editorial contribution by Dr. Fabiola Gianotti (Director-General of CERN 2016-2025).