E-MAIL-ANSCHREIBEN

Subject: A proposal for international dialogue on the preservation of the natural night sky

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Dear [Title and Name],

Humanity is entering a period of unprecedented activity in low Earth orbit. Satellite technologies provide indispensable benefits for communication, navigation, research, disaster response and global connectivity. At the same time, the rapidly increasing presence of artificial objects in the night sky raises broader questions that deserve international consideration.

The natural night sky is more than a setting for astronomical observation. It is a shared scientific, cultural and educational resource that has accompanied humanity across all societies and generations. Its visual appearance is now increasingly shaped by human decisions beyond Earth's atmosphere.

We respectfully submit the attached proposal, *"The Natural Night Sky: A Shared Heritage and a Call for International Dialogue."* It does not call for restrictions on space exploration, scientific research or commercial activity. Instead, it invites UNESCO to use its established role in education, science, culture and international cooperation to encourage an inclusive, evidence-based dialogue.

We believe UNESCO is uniquely positioned to bring together experts from science, cultural heritage, education, international law, public institutions, industry and civil society. The purpose is to explore how technological progress and the long-term preservation of an unobstructed natural night sky can advance together.

We would be grateful if you would consider this proposal and support an international discussion within UNESCO's existing mandate.

Yours sincerely,

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PROPOSAL

The Natural Night Sky
A Shared Heritage and a Call for International Dialogue

Proposal submitted for consideration by UNESCO

We Have A Dream — International Initiative

Humanity is entering a new era of space activity. As of early 2026, approximately 14,200 satellites are functioning in Earth orbit, according to the European Space Agency's space-environment statistics[1] — a number that continues to grow rapidly and remains heavily concentrated among a small number of large commercial constellations, driven by technological innovation and the increasing demand for worldwide communication, navigation, Earth observation, scientific research and connectivity.

These developments create substantial benefits. Satellite technologies support disaster response, environmental monitoring, education, navigation, scientific discovery and access to communication services across the world. Their continued development can contribute meaningfully to addressing global challenges and improving quality of life.

At the same time, the expansion of activity in near-Earth space is changing the visual appearance of the night sky. This raises questions that extend beyond engineering, orbital safety and telecommunications. It concerns astronomical observation, cultural traditions, education and the shared human experience of looking at an unobstructed natural night sky.

This proposal invites a balanced international conversation about how humanity can pursue these developments responsibly while also considering the long-term significance of the natural night sky.

Our proposal to UNESCO

We respectfully invite UNESCO, within its existing mandate and in cooperation with relevant international partners, to consider the following steps:

01 — Recognition

To acknowledge the natural night sky as a shared natural and cultural asset of outstanding significance to humanity, whose long-term preservation deserves international attention.

02 — Dialogue

To encourage an interdisciplinary and international dialogue involving astronomy, space science, environmental research, cultural heritage, education, international law, industry and civil society.

03 — Research

To support and promote further research into the scientific, cultural, educational and environmental significance of the natural night sky, including the long-term effects of changes to its visual appearance.

04 — International cooperation

To facilitate exchange among governments, scientific organisations, space agencies, commercial stakeholders and civil society in order to identify approaches that enable technological progress and the preservation of the natural night sky to advance together.

05 — Future consideration

To request that the Secretariat prepare a summary report on the outcomes of this dialogue for consideration at UNESCO's next ordinary General Conference, and, on that basis, to explore whether the existing Astronomy and World Heritage Initiative could be extended to formally include the long-term preservation of the natural night sky within its scope.

Why the natural night sky matters

The night sky is among humanity's oldest shared experiences. For millennia, people have observed the stars to navigate across land and sea, measure time, develop calendars and understand the world around them. Across cultures, the sky has shaped scientific inquiry, artistic expression, spiritual traditions and collective memory.

Unlike many landscapes, the night sky transcends national borders. It is visible from every country and has connected generations across the entirety of human history. It has encouraged curiosity, discovery and reflection on humanity's place in the universe.

Its significance is also scientific. Ground-based astronomy remains fundamental to the exploration of the universe. Observatories on Earth complement space-based instruments and contribute to research in astrophysics, planetary science, cosmology and many related fields. Favourable observing conditions are therefore an important resource for scientific progress.

The night sky also has a strong educational role. For many children and young people, observing stars and planets is a first encounter with science and an inspiration for later engagement with technology, engineering and research. Preserving the possibility of such experiences supports curiosity and scientific literacy for future generations.

As satellite activity grows, the natural appearance of the night sky may increasingly be affected by visible artificial objects. This development warrants thoughtful consideration not because progress should be prevented, but because changes to shared natural and cultural assets should be understood before they become permanent.

Progress and responsibility

Human progress has often required societies to balance innovation with the protection of shared values and common goods. Industrial development was accompanied by the preservation of historic monuments and cultural landscapes. Greater mobility led to international cooperation on maritime and aviation safety. Environmental awareness stimulated global efforts to protect biodiversity, oceans and the climate.

In each case, innovation was not rejected. Instead, societies developed principles, knowledge and cooperative frameworks that allowed progress to continue more responsibly.

The increasing use of low Earth orbit presents a comparable opportunity. Satellite systems create essential public and economic value. At the same time, their cumulative effects require long-term thinking, international exchange and the inclusion of perspectives beyond technical and commercial considerations.

Protecting the possibility of a natural night sky and enabling responsible space activity need not be competing goals. They can be complementary responsibilities. A constructive approach can strengthen public confidence, encourage technical innovation and support sustainable stewardship of the near-Earth environment.

Why UNESCO

UNESCO is uniquely suited to encourage such a dialogue. Its mandate brings together education, science, culture and international cooperation. Throughout its history, UNESCO has helped societies identify and safeguard places, traditions, knowledge and environments of significance for present and future generations.

UNESCO has also recognised the relationship between astronomy and cultural heritage, including through the Astronomy and World Heritage Initiative. This existing work demonstrates that humanity's relationship with the sky is a legitimate subject of international cultural and scientific consideration.

The present proposal does not seek to create an immediate legal classification, a new regulatory regime or restrictions on legitimate space activity, nor to duplicate the work already undertaken by astronomers, space agencies, scientific institutions and the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Rather, it proposes that UNESCO complement these efforts by convening perspectives that are often considered separately: science and education, cultural heritage and international law, industry and civil society. Such an exchange can clarify the long-term significance of the natural night sky, identify knowledge gaps and support informed future decisions.

A constructive invitation

Humanity's use of space will continue to grow. The decisions made today will influence not only technical infrastructure in orbit, but also the experience of the night sky for generations to come.

This proposal is offered in a spirit of openness, respect and cooperation. It does not claim to prescribe final answers. It asks that the natural night sky be considered as a shared human asset, and that its future be addressed through broad international dialogue, sound scientific evidence and responsible foresight.

UNESCO has the experience and convening power to support this conversation. We respectfully invite the Organisation and its Member States to consider the steps proposed above.

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1. European Space Agency, Space Environment Statistics, data as of 16 January 2026.