Question for written answer E-000710/2016
to the Commission
Rule 130
Mireille D'Ornano (ENF)

Subject: Proliferation of space debris and risks thereof

Millions of pieces of space debris are circling the Earth at more than 28 000 km/hr. A study by the Russian Science Academy even considers them to be ‘a real political and strategic danger’, citing a hypothetical collision with military satellites as an example. If nothing is done then sending satellites into space is likely to be a very hazardous undertaking in 30 years’ time.

The satellites orbiting the Earth are very necessary, particularly for mobile communications. In 2014, debris caused damage to the International Space Station on five occasions. In 2007 a Russian satellite was damaged by a debris cloud created when China destroyed an old weather satellite, thereby releasing 3 000 pieces of additional debris into space. The ensuing snowball effect is becoming a worrying vicious circle.

1. What specific actions does the Commission intend to take to prevent the proliferation of space debris reaching a point of no return?

2. Has the Commission consulted the European Space Agency in order to find permanent solutions to stop further space debris from orbiting the Earth?