

Item 4: UK General Statement at the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, 66th session, 31 May - 9 June 2023

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Space is integral to our lives. We've made excellent progress through COPUOS to advance the peaceful use and exploration of outer space and the United Kingdom is proud to participate in this committee.

Before our general statement, let me first clearly state that the UK continues to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and calls upon the Russian Federation to end its illegal war and respect the territorial integrity of other Member States.

Let me also join other Member States in urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease its provocations. Any ballistic missile launch is a clear violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, and a threat to both regional and international peace and security. We urge the DPRK to refrain from further provocations and engage meaningfully with the US in dialogue and take concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation.

Now let me set out the UK's wider position on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Chair, distinguished delegates,

The UK is proud to have taken over the leadership of the International Charter on space and major disasters from our colleagues in the Korean Aerospace Research Institute in April this year. As the devastating consequences of natural and man-made disasters continue to increase, providing satellite data to countries in need provides a vital humanitarian service. We are hosting a side event today (Monday 5 June) to

showcase the Charter and help countries understand how they can access its resources, and welcome all to join this.

Chair

On 9th January, we conducted our first successful space launch from UK soil. Although the rocket didn't reach its intended orbit, this clearly demonstrated our ability to deliver a robust, safe, agile space-launch regulatory framework; enabled under the most progressive space safety and sustainability licensing regime in the world. The UK continues working with launch operators to build a successful launch sector; ensuring future launches are aligned with our sustainability agenda.

Chair,

One year ago, we announced our ambitious UK Plan for Space Sustainability, which encompasses three core components: regulatory leadership, developing new industry-led standards, and UK leadership in the international arena.

The UK is undertaking a review of our regulatory framework for orbital activities. The UK Civil Aviation Authority has issued nearly 350 orbital licences since taking on the regulator role, but we wish to ensure we maintain a framework that incentivises safe, secure, and sustainable behaviour, investment, and growth. For example, we intend to adopt a variable limit of liability for satellite operations which would take into account the sustainability of satellite missions. This will impact how missions are designed and encourage responsible de-orbiting practices.

We are funding the Earth & Space Sustainability Initiative which will establish a new, industry-led Space Sustainability Seal. This will be a global transparent Environmental, Social and Governance – or ESG – space sustainability standard, which will be recognised by the finance and insurance communities and other governments and

regulators, to help evidence compliance with best practice in space sustainability. This Seal will help drive improvements in the sustainability of space operations. Operators will be incentivised to reach the required standard in order to benefit from improved access to finance, being classed as a better insurance risk, and smoother processes.

Internationally, the UK will continue to champion the importance of space sustainability, and we are delighted to be the anchor sponsor of the Secure World Foundation's 5th Summit for Space Sustainability, taking place this month. The UK continues to prioritise sustainability, and the power of international collaboration to promote the responsible use of space.

Chair,

Last year, His Majesty The King also announced the plans for an Astra Carta, to be launched later this year. It will act as a framework to inspire sustainability across the space industry. It aims to ensure future generations benefit from exploration and development in space, by focussing the transformative innovation and resources that we have available and embedding sustainability in all that we do.

Chair,

We attach great importance to the Long-Term Sustainability of the Outer Space Environment, and the UK is pleased we have been able to fund important work with UNOOSA looking at Member States' experiences with implementing the Guidelines. We've also funded projects relating to the registration of space objects, including the expert event which took place before this meeting. The UK would again like to thank UNOOSA for their support in these endeavours.

Chair,

We have funded an international photography exhibition called 'Our Fragile Space', being hosted here at the Vienna International Centre, and which we invite you all to visit. This offers a unique opportunity to see first-hand the impact of the increasing amount of space debris that now crowds our skies following decades of space exploration.

Finally, we would like thank you Chair for your excellent Chairmanship at COPUOS, and we extend our thanks also to the UNOOSA acting Director Mr Niklas Hedman, and the Secretariat for all their work. We look forward to a productive session and you have the UK's full support in furthering joint cooperation and dialogue in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space.