Statement by Emily Pierce
U.S. Representative to the Legal Subcommittee of the
UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Agenda Item 6 – Status and Application of International Treaties on Outer
Space, and Ways and Means, including Capacity-Building, to Promote Their
Implementation
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The four core treaties governing the use of outer space – the Outer Space Treaty, the Agreement on the Rescue and Return of Astronauts, the Liability Convention, and the Registration Convention – have served the States Parties well for many decades. The United States is honored to serve as one of the depositaries for three of these treaties: the Outer Space Treaty, the Rescue and Return Agreement, and the Liability Convention. I have consulted with the U.S. Department of State's Treaty Office regarding actions taken in Washington with respect to these treaties, and I am pleased to report that since the last Subcommittee session the Republic of Panama deposited an instrument of ratification of the Outer Space Treaty on August 9, 2023. The Republic of Colombia also deposited an instrument of ratification of the Outer Space Treaty, with a declaration, on March 21, 2024. We would welcome any further information from other depositaries on any relevant treaty actions since this Subcommittee's last meeting.

We also would welcome further adherence to these treaties, and hope that those States and eligible international organizations – including some members of UNCOPUOS and some organizations that participate as observers to this Subcommittee – that have not yet done so will become Party to these important treaties in the coming year. In particular, we strongly urge countries that are active in the space sector in any way, including through their private sectors, to become Party and fully implement these treaties.

As we move towards longer-term, more complicated operations on the Moon and beyond, the United States recognizes that these operations pose new legal and policy challenges. Sharing information consistent with our obligations under Article XI of the Outer Space Treaty can help States address many of these challenges, including, for example, issues related to coordination of activities. In this regard, we look forward to participating in the exchange of views on Article XI implementation during the working group under this agenda item. This

discussion is timely. A critical element of the Artemis Accords is transparency, and in October 2023, the Signatories announced their intent to provide certain lunar mission data parameters to the United Nations, consistent with our Article XI obligations. The United States followed this coordinated approach in submitting lunar mission data regarding scientific payloads launched to the Moon on commercial spacecraft under two missions earlier this year, part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services project.

With respect to national legislation for the authorization and continuing supervision of national space activities, in November 2023 the White House transmitted to the U.S. Congress a legislative proposal to enhance our domestic regulatory framework for space activities. If passed into law, this proposal would provide clearer pathways for the authorization and supervision of in-space activities, as well as the regulatory certainty U.S. companies need to continue to operate safely and sustainably. The legislative proposal would also allow the United States to continue to facilitate a timely and responsive regulatory environment and exemplify U.S. leadership in commercial space.

In the interim, the National Space Council adopted in December 2023 the U.S. Novel Space Activities Authorization and Supervision Framework, a companion policy that supports U.S. departments and agencies in preparing for and shaping this future regulatory environment. We look forward to sharing with members of the Subcommittee a more detailed overview of the Framework and legislative proposal in a technical presentation from Derek Hanson from the U.S. Department of Commerce on April 23.

Thank you, Chair.