

63rd Session of the Legal Subcommittee
Of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Vienna, Austria
April 2024

Thank you, Chair. Distinguished delegates and representatives, it is a great honor and privilege for me to deliver this statement on behalf of For All Moonkind. I would first like to convey from all of us at For All Moonkind, our deep appreciation for your leadership and for the entire OOSA team for their always incredible work in organizing and managing these meetings. We are grateful for all the kind assistance and guidance we are continuously provided.

Distinguished delegates, For All Moonkind is an entirely volunteer international, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization. Our volunteers include more than 100 space law, heritage law and policy experts from every inhabited continent. We are the only organization in the world committed to preserving human heritage in outer space. Our mission is to assure that historic lunar landing sites – like, for example, the site where Luna 2 impacted in 1959, the site where Apollo 11 landed in 1969, the site of Chang’e 4, which marks the first ever robotic mission to the far side of the Moon and the site of Chandrayaan 3, the first soft landing on the lunar south pole – and similar sites and objects in outer space are recognized for their outstanding value to humanity and consequently preserved and protected for posterity as part of our common human heritage.

Distinguished delegates, as stated in our Technical Presentation of April 17, it is without question that the decisions made today with respect to the potential legal model for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources will have far-reaching implications for all humanity for many generations to come.

Perched on this rare threshold, we urge you to recognize the extraordinary opportunity we have to shape a future that sees all of humanity benefiting from the vast resources and possibilities offered by outer space. This future starts with the acknowledgment that the identification, protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage must be included in the legal framework developed for space resource utilization.

Distinguished delegates, activity on and around our precious Moon is accelerating exponentially. We are running out of time. The next stage of human development relies on this Committee's ability to make substantive and unified progress. New principles must be adopted to assure success and sustainability, and, importantly, to avoid conflict and harmful interference. This is not a challenge for the COPUOS. This is the obligation of the COPUOS.

For All Moonkind takes note of and fully supports the Conference Room Paper submitted by the delegation of Romania [document A/AC.105/C.2/2024/CRP.18] offering a Proposal on a consultative mechanism on lunar activities and proposing the establishment of an Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultation. We are especially grateful that the proposal includes protection of lunar heritage sites as one of the multiplicity of technical and operation issues that need to be resolved. We are hopeful that this proposal will be approved by delegates and look forward to supporting and contributing to the work of the Action Team.

We also encourage this Committee to work with the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities and to extend the Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities to support the safety and sustainability of deep space activities, including legal, diplomatic, scientific and technical mechanisms for the identification and safeguarding of cultural heritage beyond Earth – a measure that Canada proposed to the Science and Technical Committee last year.

Distinguished delegates, in 1958, at the 992nd Meeting of the 1st Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the delegate from El Salvadore, Mr. Vega Gomez, reflected upon the expansion of humanity into space. Though at the time the development of space capabilities seemed unique to only two States, the United States and the Soviet Union, Mr. Gomez recognized that the technological triumphs of reaching space were “not the triumph of a handful of quiet” individuals, but “the result of culture accumulated through centuries, with the contributions brought by the sufferings of [humans]; it is the triumph of [human] intellect – the human that is part of us all.”

Distinguished delegates, human activities in space are the result of culture accumulated through centuries. The time has come to recognize, celebrate and protect the sites and objects which memorialize human achievements of outstanding universal value in space. These, by far, are our most precious – and most vulnerable – resources in space.

It is not hyperbole to suggest that the future of humanity depends on actions taken by this Committee today. We applaud this Legal Subcommittee and its Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities. We urge you to include heritage protection in potential legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space. Recognizing and celebrating these human achievements remains of paramount importance.

I thank you for your kind attention.

[FOR THE WRITTEN SUBMISSION ONLY]

If you would like to learn more about For All Moonkind, or if you are interested in participating in our future forums, please visit www.forallmoonkind.org and/or email info@forallmoonkind.org.