

**Statement by Gabriel Swiney, Alternate U.S. Representative to the
64th Session of UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on Agenda
Item 7, “Report of the Legal Subcommittee”
August 27, 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Chair. The United States would like to thank the Office of Outer Space Affairs, our fellow delegates, and everyone involved in making this year’s session of the Legal Subcommittee a success. Despite the unique working environment, we were able to address a wide range of issues and make significant progress in responding to the changing needs of the international community in this new era of space exploration and use.

Mr. Chair, the past 18 months have been difficult for the international community, and that includes those working on issues relating to outer space. Despite these challenges, scientific, technical, and commercial progress has continued, with more actors doing more things in outer space than humanity has ever seen before. These successes present great opportunities for humanity, but they also pose novel challenges for those of us involved in legal and policy issues relating to outer space. Governance of space and space activities must respond to the changing nature of those activities to ensure that all nations, and all people, can benefit from a peaceful, predictable, and rules-based order in outer space.

We saw tangible examples of this at the Legal Subcommittee. During this year’s session, the United States was honored to participate in a panel discussion to introduce the Artemis Accords to the Subcommittee and the Committee. This multilateral set of commitments publicly sets out the rules and principles that will guide American and partner exploration of the Moon, Mars, and beyond. Not all of those involved in lunar exploration have been so transparent.

The Accords are entirely grounded in the Outer Space Treaty and demonstrate that signatories – twelve countries at this point – commit to behave responsibly and transparently as we expand human presence beyond Earth.

As a brief aside, I would like to highlight something I just said: I spoke about *human* presence beyond Earth. I did not speak about a “manned” presence beyond Earth. Too often, here at COPUOS and elsewhere, statements and even names of programs and agencies use language that suggests that those exploring space have been and always will be men. Speaking for the United States at least, I

can say that both of those implications are wrong. Our words matter, and this body should do better.

During the Legal Subcommittee, the United States was also pleased to take part in scheduled informal consultations regarding the establishment of a working group on space resources. Thanks largely to the incredible leadership of the two moderators, these discussions resulted in a decision to establish a working group, to select the moderators as the Chair and Co-Chair of the working group, and to continue discussions about the mandate and work plan during this session of UNCOPUOS. The United States welcomes this working group, and we look forward to continuing these discussions in the coming days. Success is possible, so long as all of us set aside politics and focus on the practical issues facing humanity in these early days of exploring the resources available in the solar system.

Mr. Chair, as the only standing body of the United Nations concerned exclusively with the peaceful uses of outer space, UNCOPUOS has been extremely successful in fostering international cooperation towards this end. Indeed, for more than six decades, this Committee has focused on building consensus to advance the peaceful exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all humanity. We have no doubt that this Committee will continue to make significant progress in promoting international space cooperation. We look forward to continuing to work through this unique, cooperative forum to promote space exploration and to reap the benefits from such exploration to improve the quality of life for all here on Earth.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.