

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR

Legal Subcommittee
Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Sixtieth Session
Vienna, 31 May – 11 June 2021

Distinguished delegates,

This year, we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the first human space flight carried out by Yuri Gagarin which marked the beginning of a new era for humanity. In this regard, on 12 April 2021 we celebrated the UN declared International Day of Human Space Flight.

Space activities are thriving, with the emergence of new technologies and new actors at an unprecedented rate. Space actors have become more diverse and plural than ever before. This should be taken as an encouraging sign that space applications may soon benefit more and more people around the globe. It should also encourage us in our efforts in promoting international cooperation and enhanced use of space technologies for socioeconomic development and for addressing global challenges. At the same time, the increase in space activities demonstrates the need for the governance of outer space activities.

The Legal Subcommittee of COPUOS was at its inception designed to “study the nature of legal problems which may arise from the exploration of outer space” as it is described in General Assembly resolution 1472 (XIV) of 12 December 1959. The legal regime of outer space has been formed since then, with five United Nations treaties on outer space followed by the sets of principles on outer space and a number of other non-legally binding instruments.

The legal Subcommittee has a long and important history as can be seen, and just to inform you that this coming week we will reach the 1000th meeting of the Legal Subcommittee since its inception sixty years ago. This is an historical achievement, indeed.

Given the increasing role of space activities for all Nations, there will be continuous expectation to coordinate within the United Nations activities of legislative nature to strengthen international cooperation in space.

In this regard, I commend the Office for Outer Space Affairs for discharging the Secretary-General's responsibilities under international space law through efficiently

maintaining the Register on Objects launched into Outer Space and for advancing the work on capacity-building in space law, including through organizing the series of United Nations Conferences on Space Law and Policy.

Distinguished Delegates,

For the past year, we have been dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we could not meet last year, the continuity of the work of the Legal Subcommittee and the Committee was ensured through the decisions and actions by the Committee and the Subcommittee taken by written procedure. In the course of the two weeks ahead of us, we will be embarking on opportunities offered by virtual technologies in conducting the work of the Subcommittee in the hybrid format.

As the COVID-19 pandemic is still around, I call on delegations to assess whether their in-person attendance is necessary during the sixtieth session of the Legal Subcommittee and to use the benefits and convenience of virtual connection for the safety of delegations and secretariat staff.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Subcommittee has a special and important task to consider many areas of space law and global space governance through working groups and other platforms. Also at this session, there will be a symposium to be organized by the International Institute of Space Law and the European Centre for Space Law.

We have, ahead of us, a session with a tight schedule and a growing agenda. The Subcommittee has a unique potential for fostering dialogue and cooperation on legal and policy dimensions at global multilateral level. On my part, I would like to assure you of my solid commitment to the work of the Legal Subcommittee.

It is my obligation to facilitate the work of the Subcommittee and to contribute in a best possible way to our common endeavour. I am looking forward to supporting our work and to making progress toward achieving our goals and fulfilling the mandate of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for your attention.