

U. S. STATEMENT AGENDA ITEM 10

**GENERAL EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND VIEWS ON LEGAL
MECHANISMS RELATING TO SPACE DEBRIS MITIGATION
MEASURES, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE WORK OF THE
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT BY GABRIEL SWINEY, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO THE
LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE
PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE**

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Madame Chair, the United States is pleased that the Legal Subcommittee is continuing to exchange information regarding legal mechanisms related to space debris mitigation measures. We also want to commend the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) for its continued work on space debris and the long-term sustainability of space activities. The STSC deserves great credit for their work on the preamble and 21 non-legally binding LTS guidelines over the past decade and the United States is pleased to see these conversations transition

this year in the subcommittee to the important question of national implementation and associated capacity building.

The United States has long recognized the importance of managing the creation and effects of space debris, and those U.S. Government departments and agencies that participate in, and license, outer space activities have a robust framework of statutes, regulations, and internal policies that take into account space debris mitigation from the design stage of a satellite or space launch system to its end-of-life disposal.

We are encouraged that a number of Member States and Intergovernmental Organizations have developed debris guidelines, and believe that the implementation by even more spacecraft operators is vital to the safety and long-term sustainability of space flight.

As delegations are no doubt aware, approaches to mitigating debris are linked to evolving technologies. As technologies change, so too do the available methods for debris mitigation, as well as the cost-benefit tradeoffs of doing so. Given the evolving technical aspects of debris mitigation, and the practical, economic reality that existing platforms cannot be replaced overnight, we do not see the wisdom in codifying specific debris mitigation standards into international law at this time.

At the same time, the United States subscribes to the principle that “Responsible space actors operate with openness, transparency, and predictability to maintain the benefits of space for all humanity.” The United States encourages other States to recognize this principle. All space operators must do the same, both in our in-orbit operations, and in any reentry of space objects to the Earth. As NASA Administrator Nelson has said, “Spacefaring nations must minimize the risks to people and property on Earth of re-entries of space objects and maximize transparency regarding those operations.” The United States believes that failure by any state to minimize these foreseeable risks and maximize transparency exposes the entire international community to unnecessary risk, and that any such failure is unacceptable.

Safety and sustainability in space are of paramount importance for the United States, and we will continue to support international cooperation to develop and enhance debris mitigation technologies and techniques.

Thank you, Madame Chair, and we look forward to continued discussions on this issue.