

U.S. STATEMENT AGENDA ITEM 12

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF SPACE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

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, thank you for the opportunity to present the United States' views on this topic. As the United States has noted in this and other fora, the outer space environment has grown increasingly congested. As the volume and diversity of activities in space continue to increase, the chance for a collision increases correspondingly. Over the past year, U.S. authorities and spacecraft operators have seen an increased number of conjunction warnings, and taken a corresponding number of maneuvers to avoid any possibility of collision.

As we have noted before, the United States Government continues to share space situational awareness (SSA) information and services with governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental entities to improve the safety and sustainability of space flight. We post that data for free on space-track.org, and issue conjunction warnings as a public service to the space community. To further enhance spaceflight safety, the United States is transitioning many responsibilities for spaceflight safety support from the U.S. Department of Defense to the U.S. Department of Commerce. This transition will allow domestic commercial and international civil and commercial operators to access a broader range of data and analyses from commercial, academic as well as governmental sources through an Open Architecture Data Repository.

Madame Chair, the United States continues to view the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee as the Committee's primary forum for advancing the long-term sustainability of outer space activities (LTS). My delegation provided updates on a number of U.S. efforts to advance space sustainability at STSC. We were also pleased to note the progress made by many other delegations.

U.S. governmental and commercial experts also continue to participate in international exchanges on space sustainability, such as the very informative “Promoting Space Sustainability” virtual events convened in February and March 2021 by the UN Office of Outer Space Affairs and the United Kingdom Space Agency.

For the United States, these exchanges highlight the importance of work and cooperation by all nations in the implementation of the Preamble and 21 LTS Guidelines adopted by the Committee in June 2019. The discussions particularly underscored the key roles played by a burgeoning commercial sector as well as governmental space operators and regulatory authorities.

The United States continues to review and consider best practices and standards related to space traffic management and their role in domestic regulation of U.S. space activities. The U.S regulatory approach to spaceflight safety includes transparent and open opportunities for public participation as well as regulatory analyses based on sound science and data and the consideration of alternative approaches to and stringency of regulation.

As my delegation noted during STSC, the U.S. approach can serve as a model for rulemaking by the full range of spacefaring nations. In this regard, the United States particularly welcomes opportunities to participate in international capacity building to advance transparent and accountable approaches for space regulation.

Madame Chair, we recognize that spaceflight safety is a global challenge, and we will continue to encourage safe and responsible behavior in outer space.

In the meantime, we look forward to hearing from other delegations about their approaches to and perspectives on the legal aspects space traffic management

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.