

UK General Statement at the Legal Sub-committee of COPUOS, 31
May, Vienna

Chair, Distinguished Delegates

The Delegation of the United Kingdom is pleased to have the opportunity to share with you the progress and developments we have made since the last meeting of this sub-committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognise the important work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and are pleased to play an active role in the sub-committees, informal discussions and at the plenary. We welcome further work and increased momentum in this legal Sub-Committee on key issues such as in-situ space resource utilisation and space traffic management.

We are pleased to announce that we have made significant progress on our national regulatory framework. Following a public consultation, we have laid our Space Industry Regulations in Parliament. The new Regulations will enable commercial spaceflight activities from UK spaceports, including horizontal and vertical launch. The UK has taken an outcomes-based approach to regulation, ensuring that innovations are not stifled by unnecessary restrictions, but that safety remains at the heart of our endeavours.

The UK remains committed to meeting our legal obligations under the United Nations Treaties on Outer Space. We ensured these are reflected in our regulatory regime that will support commercial spaceflight from the UK. The UK has broadened its registration practices and is in the process of implementing our policy for the registration of satellites into our licensing regime under the Space Industry Act. Prior to any launches taking place from the UK, we will seek agreements with other relevant launching States to agree the State of Registry. We will meet our obligations under the Liability Convention and will be incorporating the appropriate requirements into our licensing regime.

The importance of the space sector to our national interests has been recognised at the highest levels of our government and is included in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. Through the establishment of a National Space Council last year, we have brought together a range of government departments to deliver

the strategic ambitions of the United Kingdom. The UK is developing an ambitious National Space Strategy to be published in the Summer.

We note that discussions around space exploration often involve questions regarding the utilisation of space resources. The political interest in this topic is welcomed by the United Kingdom. We are clear that the issue for this committee is only for in-situ space resources and that the committee should not discuss issues that are rightly the remit of other bodies, such as spectrum and GSO slot allocation by the ITU. Alongside other member states here today, we would like to join our voices to the call to establish a working group under the legal sub-committee to address the use of in-situ space resources and thank our German and Finnish colleagues for their non-paper.

Since the last meeting of this Sub-committee our commitment to work with our international partners to ensure safe and sustainable activities in space has been realised through a series of agreements.

By signing the Artemis Accords, the UK is joining international partners to agree a common set of principles which will guide space exploration for years to come. This ground-breaking agreement will guide how states should operate in space, as envisaged in the Outer Space Treaty. The Artemis Accords will ensure a shared understanding of safe operations, use of space resources, minimising space debris and sharing scientific data.

The UK is also proud to have funded our very first project through UNOOSA to support the tangible implementation of the 21 guidelines and preamble for the Long Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Activities. The UK is taking practical steps to implement the guidelines within our regulatory framework and produced a Conference Room Paper on this topic for the recent session of the Science and Technical Subcommittee (A/AC.105/C.1/2021/CRP.16).

We also recognise that there are rapid changes happening in the space sector, with new technological developments requiring a modern approach to regulation. We have reflected this in our flexible, outcomes-based approach.

The UK acknowledges the important work of the Inter-Agency Debris Coordination Committee in coordinating research and developing

guidelines that aim to limit the generation of space debris in the environment. The UK continues to use the work of the IADC to inform our licensing decisions and expectations on UK operators.

Finally, I would like to extend our thanks to the organisers of this sub-committee. The challenges of Covid-19 have been felt across the world and have impacted each of us and our fellow citizens in deep and permanent ways. We would therefore like to extend our heartfelt thanks to UNOOSA for ensuring that this meeting could go ahead, and to greet all the distinguished delegates participating over the next two weeks.