

United States Statement
UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Legal Subcommittee
Agenda Item 9: Future role and method of work of the Committee
June 8, 2021

Madame Chair,

As the only standing body of the United Nations concerned exclusively with the peaceful uses of outer space, COPUOS has spent the past six decades working tirelessly to foster international cooperation to this end. As we move into the third decade of the twenty-first century, the work of this Committee and its two subcommittees remains as important as ever.

In this regard, the United States continues to believe that the principles contained in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 negotiated in COPUOS -- as well as our other applicable international obligations -- guide the full range of governmental and private sector space activities.

Looking to the future, the Committee's principle of consensus and associated "Vienna Spirit" allow this body to address a broad range of emerging issues for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space -- including space debris mitigation, the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, and space resource utilization.

As a result, my delegation continues to remain unconvinced of the need for any action to be taken by this Committee regarding questions relating to the militarization of outer space.

Madame Chair, during this session of the Legal Subcommittee, we have noted a handful of other delegations raised aspects of this issue, and we want to provide the views of the United States in this regard.

For over three-and-a-half decades, this Committee's consensus mandate has focused on international cooperation to advance the peaceful use of outer space -- including exchanges of views under the "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes" agenda item in the full Committee.

The United States believes that this Committee is not the appropriate forum to discuss questions specifically related to the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), or the use of outer space for military and other national security activities.

Issues associated with both PAROS and the use of outer space for national security activities and related matters are more appropriately discussed in fora whose mandates specifically focus on those issues, such as the Conference on Disarmament, the UN Disarmament Commission, and the UN General Assembly's First Committee on Disarmament and International Security.

As a result, attempts to use activities of this Committee or its subcommittees as platforms for advancing positions on space security which are more appropriately discussed in multilateral disarmament fora are an unhelpful distraction from the serious work of COPUOS to advance the interests of all nations in the peaceful use of outer space.

Thank you, Madame Chair.

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