

Statement – Australia

58th Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

Agenda item 3 – General exchange of views and introduction of reports submitted on national activities.

Thank you Madam Chair, distinguished delegates.

The Australian delegation commends your work as chair of the Subcommittee, as well as the Director of the Office of Outer Space Affairs, the Secretariat and staff for their continued support of the Committee and subcommittee.

Australia appreciates the resilience and flexibility of Member States as we come together under such circumstances to continue the important work of the Committee.

International engagement – Artemis Accords and Hayabusa2

Madam Chair,

Despite the impact of COVID-19, we continue to engage with our partners, on the development of norms of behaviour to ensure the responsible and safe uses of space.

2020 was a significant year for Australia. In September, Australia became a founding signatory to the Artemis Accords.

Additionally, Australia congratulates our colleagues from Japan for the safe and successful return of Hayabusa2 to Woomera in December. We are proud of our role in this significant event and the opportunities to further humanity's scientific investigation of celestial bodies through the collection and removal of samples from the Ryugu Asteroid.

Space, COVID-19 and Australia's economic recovery

Madam Chair

While Australia works toward addressing the health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also considering the economic impact. The Australian Government is putting manufacturing front and centre of our economic recovery.

In October 2020, the Australian Government announced that space would be one of six national manufacturing areas that will benefit from strategic government investment.

The Australian Government recognises the importance and value of space and is focused on achieving excellence in space manufacturing.

Through this Strategy, our Government will look at opportunities to collaborate with industry and to make strategic investments and partnerships to boost Australia's manufacturing capabilities and expertise in the space sector. This will complement the Australian Government's existing investments, including the *International Space Investment initiative*, *Space Infrastructure Fund*, and the *Moon to Mars Initiative*.

Australia's regulatory framework

Madam Chair,

The Australian Space Agency is responsible for regulating activities that go above 100km, or involve high power rockets, as specified under the *Space (Launches and Returns) Act 2018* and associated Rules, which commenced on 31 August 2019. The Rules regulating high power rocket activities commenced on 30 June 2020.

Since establishment of the Agency in 2018, the Agency has received documentation for 17 complex applications, including Australian launch permits and launch facility licences, and has considered 20 overseas payload permits for assessment under the Act. We continue to assess and provide advice to the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology on applications from a variety of organisations including small to medium enterprise, universities and student groups.

The range of applicants provide an indication of the increasing accessibility of space. With activities rapidly increasing across the globe, there is a pressing need to work towards implementation of the Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (LTS Guidelines).

Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities and LTS 2.0 working group

Madam Chair,

Australia is committed to the development and implementation of rules and norms that seek to ensure the safety, stability and sustainability of outer space. The LTS Guidelines provide a framework that aims to ensure that current and emerging participants in space activities act in a safe and sustainable manner, while enjoying the benefits of space.

Australia is working with industry to understand their awareness, perspectives and activities related to implementation of the LTS Guidelines. Our engagement will inform our contribution to the new working group.

We thank Ms Pontsho Maruping of South Africa for her chairing of informal discussions on the LTS 2.0 working group. Subsequently, Australia is a co-sponsor to the Conference Room Paper (CRP) on a Terms of Reference, Methods of Work and Workplan.

Madam Chair,

The CRP proposes a pragmatic and outcome-based approach to discussions on implementation of the LTS Guidelines.

As we participate in working group discussions over the next two weeks, we encourage Member States to consider co-sponsorship of the CRP.

Impact of small satellite constellations on astronomy activities

Madam Chair,

The rapid growth and evolution of space activities, including the emergence of large satellite constellations and the changing allocation of the radio spectrum to radiocommunications services, have the potential to create both economic and social opportunities and unintended consequences. These changes may impact users of the outer space environment and ground-based stakeholders such as astronomers. It is important that stakeholders continue to work together to investigate practical solutions and best practices to support a safe, stable, and sustainable outer space environment.

Work of the Committee

Madam Chair,

International law and norms of behaviour provide a means to address emerging challenges, including in outer space. COPUOS plays an important role in facilitating the development of rules and norms of behaviour in space; as

well as facilitating a consensus-based approach to addressing emerging challenges.

Australia continues to be strongly engaged with the work of the Committee. As such, we welcome the opportunity to consider the draft report and recommendations of the space weather expert group. Additionally, we are excited by the work of the Space and Global Health Working Group, the current pandemic has highlighted the importance of innovative space technologies in mapping and informing public health responses.

Conclusion

Madam Chair,

Australia is committed to its international obligations and engagement with Member States through COPUOS. During such extraordinary circumstances, it's important that Member States continue to engage in good faith, as we have during the intersession, to progress the work of the Committee.

We look forward to our discussions, and welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development and implementation of norms of responsible behaviour in space and on Earth.

Thank you.