

**UK General Statement at the Scientific and Technical Sub-  
committee of COPUOS, 19-30<sup>th</sup> April**

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.

A major update in regards to our national regulatory framework, is that following a successful public consultation, the UK Space Agency, along with its partners, will soon lay the draft Space Industry Regulations in Parliament. The new Regulations will enable a range of commercial spaceflight activities, including horizontal and vertical launch from the UK. The UK continues to use international best practice to guide our activities and is working with a number of space agencies and national regulators to ensure consistency and transparency in our approach.

Ahead of the Space Industry Regulations coming into force, the UK continues to licence space activities operated from the UK through the Outer Space Act and in the last year we have licensed 115 missions, ranging from cubesats to in-orbit demonstrators. It is apparent that missions are becoming increasingly more complex and, while providing significant benefits to our everyday lives, continue to highlight the need to responsibly regulate them.

An example of the new type of missions that are being licensed from the UK is the OneWeb constellation. OneWeb's fifth launch took place last

month and saw an additional 36 satellites added to the constellation. As similar systems start to be deployed, near-term safety and long-term sustainability must be assessed. The UK acknowledges the important work of the Inter-Agency Debris Coordination Committee in developing a common understanding of the sustainable use of Earth orbit and continue to use this work and their associated guidelines to inform our decision making processes.

Recognising the strategic importance of space to the UK's interests, the UK Government is developing an ambitious National Space Strategy to be published in the Summer. The strategy will provide cross-government strategic direction to future space activities and investment.

International cooperation in space continues to be key and the UK celebrates the successes of a number of space agencies in recently delivering spacecraft to Mars. These missions will be joined by ESA's Rosalind Franklin Rover, which will be launched in 2022 and has had significant involvement from UK industry and academia. The UK also eagerly awaits the next phase of Mars exploration through NASA-ESA's Mars Sample Return campaign, which will again see significant UK involvement through ESA's Sample Fetch Rover.

For technology at a national level, last year the UK Space Agency launched its National Space Innovation Programme. The Programme has so far supported a number of national and international projects.

Within this programme the UK is also proud to have funded our very first project through UNOOSA to support the tangible implementation of the Long Term Sustainability (LTS) Guidelines, details of which were

discussed in our statement on LTS alongside our CRP on national reporting. We look forward to productive discussions on the establishment of a new LTS Working Group to help facilitate the sharing of experiences, practices and lessons learned in guideline implementation.

Recognising the international success that is the 21 guidelines for the Long Term Sustainability of Outer Space activities, the UK is also keen to see a new approach on the disarmament agenda. To support this, we continue to work with nations to consider how to deal with the emerging threats to space operations and believe that this is best done in the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. In December 2020, the UN General Assembly adopted the UK's resolution directing the UN Secretary General (SG) to seek Member States' views on responsible space behaviours. We look forward to both the release of the UN SG's report later this year, and to working further with nations to tackle space threats.

For this session of STSC, we also look forward to understanding whether consensus has been achieved by the working group on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. The UK recognises the importance of reaching a shared understanding on the safe use of nuclear power sources and the need for continued focussed technical discussions on this topic to build on the findings of the working group. We would again like to offer our thanks to Dr Sam Harbison for his long-serving and excellent leadership of the working group.

The UK also notes the conference room paper submitted by the International Astronomical Union on the topic of the Dark and Quiet skies for astronomy. We would like to thank the IAU for their report on the impacts on the astronomical community from space operations. The UK recognises this as an important topic and we are currently investigating it at a national level alongside other orbital policy areas. We welcome discussion with other Member states to understand the most appropriate mechanism for further discussion at UN COPUOS on this topic.

Finally, Chair, distinguished delegates, we look forward to a constructive session to further our cooperation and dialogue in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space.