

**Statement by Emily Pierce, U.S. Representative to the  
66<sup>th</sup> Session of UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on Agenda  
Agenda Item 7  
“Report of the Legal Subcommittee”  
June 2, 2023**

Thank you, Chair. A NASA report entitled “Lunar Landing Operations and Policy Analysis,” released just this past October, found that humanity should see at least 22 lunar surface missions just within the next five years, with half of them occurring in the Moon’s south polar region. The report noted that “NASA and other operators will face challenges never faced before” as a result of the proliferation – and potential proximity – of actors and activities on the Moon. These challenges make clear that the importance of international cooperation continues to grow. In this context, the multilateral work of the Legal Subcommittee continues to be critical to further our understanding regarding the application of international law to current and future space exploration and other activities.

At its 62<sup>nd</sup> session, the Legal Subcommittee continued to make progress on a range of issues in response to the changing needs of the international community in this new era of space exploration and use that we have been advancing. The United States thanks Nomfuneko Majaja for her steady chairing of the Subcommittee for the 2022-2023 biennium, as well as the Office of Outer Space Affairs, in particular acting director Niklas Hedman, for its support of Subcommittee members in taking important steps forward.

Key among these important steps was the beginning of substantive discussions within the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities in accordance with its work plan under the leadership of Andrzej Misztal and Steven Freeland. Although we regret that the Working Group was prevented from adopting a report, it is important to recall that the Working Group engaged in several fruitful initial exchanges of views related to, among other issues, the scope of space resources, as well as the type of activities, that should be considered by the Working Group. The Working Group also began to discuss how space resource utilization can benefit humankind by supporting safe and sustainable lunar operations, and the United States was pleased that NASA contributed to this discussion through a technical presentation at LSC. These discussions built constructively upon the written submissions of approximately 18

Member States, as well as seven observers of the Committee. We encourage other Committee members to share their views through written contributions to the Working Group.

In addition, we are confident that the Working Group should be able to finalize during this plenary session the modalities for an international conference in 2024, which will be an important platform for Working Group members to obtain information regarding planned space resource activities of commercial entities and other stakeholders, as well as to learn about operational or other obstacles they may be facing under the existing legal framework. We believe that by focusing on the practical issues facing humanity in these early days of exploring the resources available in the solar system, the working group can be successful.

The Working Group on the Status and Application of the United Nations Treaties on Outer Space, ably guided by Chair Franziska Knur, also took an important step to conclude its consideration of recommendations to enhance registration practices for space objects forming part of a satellite constellation. We believe implementation of these recommendations [can][may] contribute to enhancing spaceflight safety and sustainability. In addition, the United States looks forward to participating in the Working Group's continued exchange views on the implementation of Article XI of the Outer Space Treaty and information sharing related to space activities in 2024.

Chair, the United States will continue to be guided by the four core – and widely accepted – treaties on outer space: the Outer Space Treaty; the Rescue and Return Agreement; the Liability Convention; and the Registration Convention. Under the legal framework of these treaties, the use of space by nations, international organizations, and private entities has flourished. International law is a key tool to enable space activities to grow in a safe, sustainable, and predictable environment. In that regard, we recognize the continued importance of meeting our obligations to authorize and supervise the activities of non-governmental U.S. actors in outer space, and we were pleased that the U.S. National Space Council could update the Legal Subcommittee on current efforts related to novel commercial space activities in a technical presentation. As the U.S. Space Priorities Framework acknowledges, “[a]s space activities evolve, the norms, rules, and principles that guide outer space activities also must evolve.”

Thank you, Chair.