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**OPENING STATEMENT**

**SHERIF SEDKY**

**Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**

**Sixty-seventh session**

**Vienna, 19-28 June 2024**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Representatives,

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you all to the 67th session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). I am honored to have been elected Chair and thank you all for the confidence placed in me and I assure you of my commitment to continuing the successful work of the Committee.

Together with my colleagues in the bureau for 2024, Mr. Juan Francisco Facetti Fernandez of Paraguay and Mr. Hasan Abbas of Pakistan, and the handover of the bureau for 2025, Mr. Rafiq Akram of Morocco as the Chair and Ms. Hesa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain as the Second Vice Chair. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Omran Sharaf of the United Arab Emirates, who proficiently guided the work of the Committee for the period 2022-2023 together with his bureau members for that period, Ms. Jenni Tapio of Finland in 2022 and Ms. Carolina Rego Costa of Portugal in 2023, and Mr. Oleg Ventskovsky of Ukraine.

The COPUOS Subcommittees held substantial discussions this year and made important progress in key areas including space sustainability, space resources, consultation on lunar activities, the use of nuclear power sources and space law. I would, in particular, like to thank the Chairs of the two Subcommittees, Ms. Ulpia-Elena Botezatu of Romania and Mr. Santiago Ripol Carulla of Spain for their work and guidance. Yes, we encountered some hurdles, but we remain committed and will deliver in line with our responsibility as the prime multilateral body for the peaceful, scientific, and legal aspects of space.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Working Groups, who have already made this cycle a success.

Important achievements have been made. The Working Group of the Whole agreed on the scope, duration and the title of the agenda item on “Dark and quiet skies, astronomy and large constellations: addressing emerging issues and challenges” and have recommended the item to the Committee for approval. The LTS Working Group held a Workshop during the 61st session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Nuclear Power Sources Working Group kicked off work under its multi-year workplan.

The Space Resources Working Group held an International Conference on Space Resources, during the 63rd session of the Legal Subcommittee, and an expert meeting collecting preliminary inputs for consideration at the international conference in Vienna in 2024, which was co-hosted by Belgium and Luxembourg and organized in cooperation with the United Nations. The Status of the Treaties Working Group agreed its multi-year workplan on the exchange of views on the implementation of Art XI of the Outer Space Treaty.

I also would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to the UNOOSA Director, Ms. Aarti Holla-Maini, and her dedicated Team for their outstanding and substantive support to the Committee

Dear Aarti, as this is your first session of the Committee, it is my privilege to thank you for your leadership as UNOOSA Director and to your team for implementing the increasingly important mandate of UNOOSA. I welcome the Director’s leadership in providing a vision and strategy aligned to the priorities of Member States and for keeping us motivated and engaged with a new and innovative approach. The UN Lunar Conference is a testament of one of such new initiatives.

I also note with appreciation that the three bodies established by this Committee, being the ICG, SMPAG and IAWN have continued to deliver and drive forward international collaboration and coordination. I thank all delegations for their efforts in ensuring this progress.

I am conscious that I am assuming the honor of this Chairmanship at a difficult time, where this Committee and its two Subcommittees are called upon to rise to the challenge of developing relevant consensual frameworks as needed, while building upon existing UN treaties, for a sector which is advancing at a pace we have never seen before. Furthermore, it is crucial to continue to strengthen international collaboration to implement space 2030 agenda, especially through allowing developing countries to harness the benefits of space technology, drive socio-economic development and improve resilience to environmental challenges and ensure fair access to space.

**Distinguished Delegates**,

The importance of this on-going work in the Committee and its subcommittees will be further reinforced at the Summit of the Future in September this year. I encourage each and every one of you to engage your capitals and your colleagues in New York on the importance *firstly*, of implementing relevant frameworks agreed by this Committee and *secondly*, of our intention, as the only multilateral Committee responsible for outer space governance to work and hopefully agree on elements and determinants that address new space challenges such as Space Traffic Coordination, Active Debris Removal, and Space Resources. I do believe we have everything to gain by preserving Vienna as the historic and future center of space governance. The momentum is there, let us come together and embrace it.

The relevance of this Committee is also clearly underscored by the continued and growing interest of new Member States and non-governmental entities to join and constructively contribute to the dialogue on new space challenges and opportunities that are addressed here.

This year, and as per General Assembly resolution A/RES/78/72, I welcome European Astronomical Society and Three Country-Trusted Broker as the newest international organizations with observer status within the Committee. I’m furthermore looking forward for the Committee to consider latest membership and observer applications at this session.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

We have a tight program before us, and I am confident that this session will once again serve as an outstanding platform for dialogue on critical issues. The world's attention is on this Committee. In order to make good progress and successfully arrive at the adoption of our Final Report, I kindly ask you to respect the time limits for statements, which is maximum 5 minutes, especially given the numerous requests for statements that we have received. I highly appreciate your collective efforts to uphold the Vienna Spirit through the virtue of compromise and by focusing squarely on the substance and technical nature of this Committee.

If we can continue to make progress, I strongly believe our actions will reaffirm the value of the work of this Committee and its key role in space governance within the UN system and globally. We have 8 busy days before us and there is a wealth of diplomatic expertise in this room. I count on your constructive cooperation to make this session a success.

I thank you for your kind attention. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_