

**Statement by Ambassador Holgate, Co-Head of Delegation for the United States
67th Session of UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on Agenda
Item 5, “General Exchange of Views”
June 20, 2024**

Thank you, Chair. The United States congratulates you on your election.

As I look around the room today, I am struck by how a small Committee with only 18 members in 1958 has grown to 102 Member States, with four more joining this year. It is no coincidence that this growth correlates to humanity’s growing use of outer space. In a matter of decades, we have progressed from Sputnik and Apollo to successful lunar landings from four different countries in the past year alone and an international space telescope that is showing us the dawn of time. These feats not only push the bounds of humanity’s knowledge and capability beyond our planet, but bring that knowledge right back to Earth to help our lives here and now. Every person in this room has used space assets to find their way home, has eaten food grown by space-enabled precision agriculture, and has seen the clear evidence from space data of the magnitude of the climate crisis we now face. Commercial satellites connected more than 71 million people to the internet last year, playing an essential role in bridging the digital divide. There are so many Member States in this room today not because outer space is interesting (though it is), but because it is vital.

I am also struck by the amount of cooperation within the Members of this Committee. We have deflected asteroids together. We have peered into the farthest reaches of space and time together. And we have orbited the Earth at over 28,000 kilometers per hour together. We often hear people say, “Space is hard.” But working together, we have achieved what once seemed impossible. Cooperation is not a luxury in space, it is a necessity. We need every country in this room, every actor in space, to understand that we’re in this together. What we do here and now, how we treat the space environment and how we explore other celestial bodies, will affect all of us and future generations.

That’s why the work of UNCOPUOS is becoming even more vital to the safe and sustainable use of outer space. Recent initiatives on space resource activities, information sharing, advancing the long-term sustainability of outer space, dark and quiet skies, and lunar consultation mechanisms are just a few of the many productive efforts of this Committee and its subcommittees. It is more important

than ever that we keep this Committee functioning effectively and expend every effort to reach consensus to move forward as an international community.

I would also like to use this opportunity to highlight some of the recent achievements that the United States, often in partnership with many in this room, has achieved since our last meeting. The successful crewed launch of the Starliner spacecraft to the International Space Station on June 5 marked another milestone in the advancement of human spaceflight and has set the United States and our international partners one step closer to our ambitious space exploration goals. Last September, the OSIRIS-REx capsule landed in the Utah desert after completing its seven-year, 3.7-billion-mile journey to gather material from the asteroid Bennu to better understand the origins of the universe. The spacecraft is not done, however; it is now on its way to the asteroid Apophis to witness its nearly unprecedented close approach to Earth in 2029, where Apophis will fly by our planet at a distance closer than some satellites we have in orbit.

NASA recently released its Space Sustainability Strategy, which will guide NASA's efforts to measure and assess space sustainability, identify cost-effective solutions, incentivize the adoption of sustainable practices, and enhance collaboration with the global space community. The United States' Office of Space Commerce also debuted its vision for "Global Space Situational Awareness Coordination." This document details our approach to facilitating a global, coordinated system of SSA providers that will provide consistent and reliable data to enable a safer and more sustainable orbital environment for all operators. I invite you to hear from the director of the Office of Space Commerce, Richard DalBello, at our side event on Friday, June 21.

We have seen the Artemis Accords continue to grow, both in the number of signatories, now [43], and in their impact. Our recent workshop in Montreal led to substantive discussions on non-interference, space object registration beyond low-Earth orbit, and better information sharing, and we look forward to these efforts complementing and enhancing our work here in UNCOPUOS.

One of the most important principles of the Accords is the principle of transparency. Open data and open science have been a cornerstone of the United States' space activities, an embodiment of the NASA motto, "For the benefit of all." The U.S. Mission in Vienna, jointly with NASA and in collaboration with UNOOSA, recently ran a competition to encourage people around the world to develop innovative visualizations of Earth observation data to advance the SDGs. I

hope many of you will be able to attend our side event on Tuesday, June 25, to see the winning teams present their amazing work.

The United States thanks the Office for Outer Space Affairs and its director, Aarti Holla-Maini, for its impressive work over the past year. Along with other examples of this work, we are grateful to UNOOSA and the Government of Canada for hosting Space4Women Expert Meeting and developing a Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit. Just as space exploration has benefited from an increasingly diverse set of actors, the space sector is stronger because of its diverse workforce.

Chair, the future of space activities depends on respect for international law. Yet one Member State continues to violate international law and threatens to undermine core tenets of the Outer Space Treaty. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine is a clear violation of the UN Charter. Russia also vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that reaffirmed longstanding, clear, and fundamental obligations of States Parties under the Outer Space Treaty. While the mandate of UNCOPUOS is to promote international cooperation, we cannot turn a blind eye to these threats to international law and the long-term sustainability, stability, and peaceful uses of outer space. To that end, Chair, any affiliation between the United Nations and the proposed regional center for space science and technology education in the Russian Federation remains wholly inappropriate.

In closing, while the number of obstacles and challenges we face may seem daunting at times, I am heartened to think of where we all started many decades ago and where we are now. New entrants into outer space bring new ideas, new perspectives, and new opportunities for cooperation. This Committee has a massive responsibility before it as we discuss how to address issues ranging from the long-term sustainability of outer space to the utilization of space resources, and the decisions we make here will shape how we use outer space for generations to come.

Thank you, Chair.