Item 14. Space Exploration and Innovation, United Kingdom

Chair, distinguished delegates,

Humanity's exploration amongst the stars is perhaps an infinite journey that began right here on Earth. We are privileged to live in a time where ideas on how to reach this final frontier, conceived in the minds of the curious for millennia before us, have become, and continue to become, a reality. The development of new technology to support these missions continues to drive innovation and cooperation around the world as we aim to explore these new horizons and reap the benefits associated, for all.

As part of ESA's lunar lander Argonaut programme, the United Kingdom has procured a key propulsion contract in the development of the Lunar Descent Element, responsible for transporting and landing important cargo onto the lunar surface.

In 2025, the UK produced an internal report on Space Nuclear Power capabilities within the UK and have recently commissioned a deep dive into the UK's In-situ Resource Utilisation capabilities.

We are also exploring avenues for the future participation of the commercial space sector, particularly on access to LEO and new orbital space station concepts.

In human space exploration, the UK's John McFall has been medically certified to undertake a long-duration mission following the conclusion of ESA's Feasibility study, which successfully demonstrated that it is technically feasible to fly someone with a physical disability, like John's, on a six-month mission to the ISS as a fully integrated crew member.

The UK continues to be a proud signatory of the Artemis Accords along with over 50 other nations. The Accords are a set of practical, non-binding principles for conducting civil deep space activities in a safe, sustainable, and transparent manner seeking to complement and operationalize the outer space treaties. The Accords are open for all to sign, and the UK welcomes further signatories.

This year the UK Space Agency published a technical framework on Planetary protection this is aimed to support exploration by giving UK operators clarity on how to meet the UK's planetary protection obligations by using the COSPAR Planetary Protection Guidelines. With an increasing number of space missions targeting various celestial bodies, including Mars, Europa, and the Moon, the importance of maintaining the integrity of these environments while protecting our own biosphere has never been greater.

Thank you, Chair.