

Statement by the Republic of Maldives
United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)
Vienna, Austria – 26/06/2025

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as Chair to the Committee. We look forward to your leadership in these challenging times.

The Republic of Maldives is honoured to take the floor for the very first time in this distinguished Committee. This moment marks the beginning of a journey — not only for our country, but, we hope, for many small island developing states and emerging space nations who have long looked to the stars without yet having a seat at this table.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. That this Committee convenes in spite of budgetary constraints is a testament to UNOOSA's resilience and Ms. Aarti Holla-Maini's leadership. But expressions of gratitude must be matched with action. As new countries begin to enter the space domain, the role of UNOOSA becomes more vital, not less. The Maldives is committed to working with our Permanent Mission in New York and other Member States to help ensure that UNOOSA — and therefore COPUOS — is strengthened, resourced, and protected.

Small State, Large Horizon

Mr. Chair, though new to this Committee, the Maldives has been actively building its space ecosystem over the past two years. Through the work of the Maldives Space Research Organisation, we have applied Earth Observation technologies to support maritime and environmental security — addressing challenges such as illegal fishing, coastal erosion, habitat degradation, and land subsidence.

We have also been actively engaged in crucial conversations related to space and island nations. In 2023 and 2024, we convened the **Space for Island Nations Conference (SINC)** — a platform we founded to bring together emerging and established space actors to explore how space can serve the unique needs of island nations. That dialogue will continue later this year at the International Astronautical Congress, where we are honoured to help shape the IAF Workshop on this very theme.

Similarly, as mentioned yesterday by France and UNOOSA, we also were involved in the founding of the **Space for Oceans Alliance** — a timely and vital coalition to ensure that space capabilities are mobilized in defense of our oceans.

Our approach to space has never been one of passive consumption but of active contribution. As the world's flattest country — and a nation cutting across the equator — we have carefully identified what makes us unique, and how we can contribute actively to the global space sector.

This includes hosting space situational awareness sensors, enabling international ground station infrastructure that can serve the needs of not just earth orbits but also cis-lunar and lunar missions, and — perhaps most urgently — building a nationwide sensing system that delivers in-situ data on our environment and oceans. Data that is essential to make space technology work better — not only for island nations like ours, but for the world's oceans as a whole.

We are here to participate fully. And we call on other SIDS to see space not as a distant dream, but as a strategic domain. Our experience managing vast maritime spaces with scarce resources and overlapping interests offers real lessons for space governance. These are insights we hope to contribute — and perspectives we believe deserve to be heard.

Reaffirming the Spirit of Space

Mr. Chair, Yesterday's interventions reminded us of the power of this forum — but also its fragility. Some statements strayed into divisive political rhetoric, out of step with the spirit of COPUOS.

As a new member, we say this gently but clearly: that is not what we expected.

Space has always stood apart — a domain where cooperation triumphed even when geopolitics failed. Let us protect that tradition. Let us ensure that this committee remains a sanctuary for scientific, inclusive, and peaceful engagement — especially for the new generation of states that have joined and are about to join.

A Domain of Peace

And so, we reaffirm a principle that is especially important to us as a vulnerable frontline nation that needs space technology to protect itself: **space must remain a peaceful domain**. It should never become a theatre for conflict. The Maldives will engage in conversations here in Vienna and in Geneva to help advance this principle. And we will do so with the clarity of perspective that comes from being a small nation entrusted with the stewardship of a vast ocean — where balance, restraint, and cooperation are not ideals, but survival tools.

Mr. Chair, the Maldives arrives with humility, but also with incredible resolve. We believe that space governance can and must reflect the best of multilateralism. And we stand ready to help shape a future where no voice is too small, and no space too big, to be shared.

Thank you.