

7. Statement by Mr Santiago Ripol Carulla
Chair of the Legal Subcommittee of
the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Vienna, 26 June 2025

Distinguished Delegates and Representatives,

It is with great pleasure to present to the Committee the achievements of the Legal Subcommittee during its sixty-fourth session, held from 5 to 16 May this year.

I would once again like to thank the States members of the Committee for placing trust in me as the Chair of this Subcommittee. It has been a privilege to work with all delegations to further expand and strengthen international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. The Legal Subcommittee continues to serve as a unique global platform to make progress in developing legal frameworks to carry out space activities. At the same time, through the work of the Subcommittee, we promote awareness in the use of space technology applications in many critical areas of concern to all humanity for the benefit of present and future generations.

This year, ~~has been no exception. T~~he Subcommittee achieved progress across a wide range of areas, as reflected in its full report, in document A/AC.105/1362. The decisions and recommendations of the Subcommittee are contained in paragraphs 54, 58, 73, from 77 to 79, 85, from 146 to 148, from 159 to 164, from 168 to 170, 221, 246, 279, 294, 297 and 304.

Regarding international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations relating to space law, the Subcommittee noted the role of such organizations in the development, strengthening and furtherance of the understanding of international space law. The Subcommittee agreed that it was important to continue to exchange information on recent developments in their activities in the area of space law and that such organizations should once again be invited to report to the Subcommittee.

With respect to the status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space, and ways and means, including capacity-building, to promote their implementation, the Subcommittee noted the growing number of States Parties to the five United Nations treaties on outer space and encouraged those States that had not yet become Parties to the treaties to consider doing so.

The Subcommittee noted that the implementation of article XI of the Outer Space Treaty was important to enhance transparency among member States. In this regard, the Subcommittee noted the work of the Working Group on the Status and Application of the Five United Nations Treaties on Outer Space under the able leadership of Ms. Franziska Knur of Germany. In accordance with the workplan covering the period from 2025 to 2027, the Working Group focused on developing a standardized template that could be used as a tool to submit information pursuant to that article on a voluntary basis. In accordance with its Workplan.

To facilitate discussions of the Working Group at its session next year, the Secretariat was requested to prepare a background paper on how an easily accessible and searchable repository of information submitted under article XI of the Outer Space Treaty could be maintained, drawing on the experience of other international information exchange mechanism.

Under the agenda item on matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space, the Working Group was reconvened this year under the chairmanship of Mr Ian Grosner of Brazil, who made untiring efforts to guide deliberations in the Working Group in a most inclusive manner. With substantive contributions received from those States that had previously not made submissions, the Working Group considered such timely topics as suborbital flights and the relationship between plans to establish a system of space traffic management and the definition and delimitation of outer space.

Regarding the geostationary orbit, the Subcommittee noted that the geostationary orbit should be used in line with international law. The Subcommittee heard diverging views on

its character and utilization, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit.

The Subcommittee agreed to propose to the Committee that the agenda of the Subcommittee at its sixty-fifth session, in 2026, continues to include the items on matters relating to: (a) the definition and delimitation of outer space; and (b) the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union.

As part of the discussions on the future role and method of work of the Committee, the Subcommittee noted progress made on matters relating to the management of technical presentations, proposals to hold a fourth United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, known as UNISPACE IV, and the Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultations, established by the Committee at its sixty-seventh session in 2024.

Regarding the technical presentations, the discussions held under the skilful leadership of Mr Prakash Chauhan of India resulted in the agreement to manage technical presentations at sessions of the Committee and its subcommittees through the following approach:

- a. One or more full meetings per session of the Committee or its subcommittees could be allocated for technical presentations;
- b. Presentations should be grouped according to relevant agenda items;
- c. The dates of the meetings fully dedicated to technical presentations should be included in the indicative schedule of work contained in the annotated provisional agenda for the respective session;
- d. Whenever feasible, presentations should be followed by a question-and-answer segment to facilitate interactive discussions.

Concerning UNISPACE IV, the Subcommittee agreed that Morocco and Italy, as the incoming Chair of the sixty-eighth session of the Committee and the Chair-designate of the sixty-ninth and the seventieth sessions of the Committee, respectively, should be appointed

as the co-facilitators of the deliberations on the possible convening of UNISPACE IV in 2027. It was agreed that at least three intersessional meetings should be held before this session of the Committee to further discuss the possible objectives, form, venue, dates, participants, organization and scope, and financial aspects. The Subcommittee recommended that the Committee at its present session make a decision regarding the holding of UNISPACE IV in 2027.

During this year's session of the Subcommittee, the Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultation also met to advance its work under the able leadership by its Co-Chairs, Ms Ulpia Botezatu of Romania and Mr Hasan Abbas of Pakistan. The Action Team focused on further developing its draft workplan which would include an initial list of potential priority topics. With the aim of submitting its workplan to the Committee for its endorsement at the present session, the Action Team agreed to meet during the intersessional period to further advance discussions. An increasing number of representatives appointed by States participate in the Action Team as its members, reaching one hundred from more than thirty States.

General exchange of views continued on potential legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources. Under this agenda item, the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities was reconvened and conducted its work in accordance with its five-year work plan covering the period from 2023 to 2027. I should like to commend the extraordinary efforts by Mr Steven Freeland of Australia. During the intersessional period earlier this year, despite the tragic passing of Mr Andrzej Misztal of Poland, the Chair of the Working Group, Mr Freeland ensured that the work continued and prepared the initial draft set of recommended principles for space resources activities. The Subcommittee noted that the initial draft provided a good basis for further discussions, taking into account the need to ensure that such activities were carried out in accordance with international law and in a safe, sustainable, rational and peaceful manner. During this year's session, the Subcommittee endorsed the appointment of Mr Freeland as Chair and Mr Ayman Mahmoud Mohamed Ahmed of Egypt as Vice-Chair of the Working Group.

The Subcommittee welcomed the constructive engagement by delegations during the session and agreed that further intersessional consultations should be held to advance the work of the Working Group. It was further agreed that a revised version of the draft set of recommended principles should be prepared and made available by July 2025, for consideration by the Working Group both intersessionally and at the sixty-fifth session of the Legal Subcommittee in 2026.

The Subcommittee continued its general exchange of information and views on legal mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation and remediation measures, taking into account the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. The Subcommittee noted with satisfaction that the compendium of space debris mitigation standards adopted by States and international organizations, developed at the initiative of Canada, Czechia and Germany, enabled all interested stakeholders to benefit from access to a comprehensive and structured set of current instruments and measures on space debris mitigation.

The Subcommittee expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for updating and maintaining the compendium and continuing to make the latest version available on a dedicated web page. It was agreed that Member States of the United Nations and international intergovernmental organizations with permanent observer status with the Committee should continue to be invited to contribute further to the compendium.

Under the item entitled “General exchange of information on non-legally binding United Nations instruments on outer space”, the Subcommittee encouraged States members of the Committee and international intergovernmental organizations having permanent observer status with the Committee to continue to contribute to the Compendium on mechanisms adopted in relation to non-legally binding United Nations instruments on outer space and share information on their practices related to these instruments.

During the general exchange of views on the legal aspects of space traffic management, the interested delegations conducted informal consultations on the margins of its sixty-fourth session on the proposal to establish a study group on the legal and policy

aspects of space traffic. ~~The Subcommittee recommended that the proposal be considered further during the sixty-eighth session of the Committee.~~

The Subcommittee noted the importance of further discussing legal and policy aspects of space traffic management, taking into account the interests of developing countries and emerging spacefaring nations and giving equal consideration to the work of both subcommittees, and that the Committee should be able to rely on the expertise of both its subcommittees with a view to producing tangible outcomes for a possible UNISPACE IV. The Subcommittee recommended that the proposal for a study group on the legal and policy aspects of space traffic be considered further during this session of the Committee.

Finally, under the agenda item entitled “General exchange of views on the application of international law to small-satellite activities”, the Subcommittee noted the opportunities and benefits of small-satellite activities for accessing space, in particular for developing States and related governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Subcommittee noted that, in view of the growing trend of small-satellite activities and in order to guarantee the safety and sustainability of outer space activities, those activities should be carried out within existing international frameworks, including the United Nations treaties and principles on outer space, the ITU Constitution and Convention and the ITU Radio Regulations. The Subcommittee agreed that the continuation of its work under this item would provide valuable opportunities to address topical issues relating to international and national policy and regulatory measures regarding the use of small satellites.

Last but not least, the Subcommittee agreed on the agenda for its next session and on the holding of the IISL/ECSL symposium. It also reviewed the suggestion to add an item on benefit-sharing to support developing countries to its agenda, and agreed that the delegations concerned would hold informal consultations and report to the Committee at its present session on the outcomes.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge and express my sincerest appreciation for the commitment and cooperative spirit demonstrated by all delegations. The progress achieved this year lays a firm base for our work ahead. I am confident that, together, we will continue

to strengthen the legal framework governing outer space for the benefit of all humankind—
today and for our future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.