

United Kingdom Proposal for the Future Work of the Working Group of the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities

The need for a substantive conclusion in 2026:

1. There is a need for a substantive final report in 2026 from this Working Group that encompasses recommendations across all of the areas within the group's mandate. This is not only to have a clear outcome from the expertise, time, and resources dedicated to this Working Group, but also to form the basis for future discussions.

Future activities and work of the working group:

2. It is important that discussions on space sustainability continue to have a central "home" within UNCOPUOS. Therefore, we support continuing space sustainability discussions under the agenda item on "Long-term sustainability of outer space activities" (LTS) as part of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) and considering the continuation of a Working Group (WG) that adopts either a new or revised method of work and new or extended workplan that will allow for more focused discussions involving experts. This would ensure that COPUOS continues to play a leading role in the discussions on space sustainability.
3. There are two options available for the Working Group: 1) establish a new Working Group subsequent to the conclusion of the current Working Group's mandate with a new Terms of reference, methods of work and workplan, 2) extend the current Working Group with a revisions to the Terms of reference, methods of work and workplan
4. In either option the Working Group should include expert discussions in some form (e.g. by establishing Expert Groups) to enable the substantive exchange of ideas and expertise. One issue that has become apparent during the challenge-based discussions in the current Working Group is the difficulty of holding substantive discussions due to the lack of real-time expert input.
5. In addition, both options should recognise that there are a number of initiatives being discussed (or recently established) within COPUOS and its subcommittees which have space sustainability as part of their focus e.g. the UAE Proposal for the Establishment of an Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness, ATLAC's on-going potential discussions on the inclusion of lunar orbital and surface debris mitigation/prevention as a priority topic to be addressed and the Group of Friends on Dark and Quiet Skies. Therefore, the LTS WG has a critically important role to act as a convenor of Member States to reflect upon the recommendations made by these initiatives which have involved expert led discussions and reflect the recommendations made which are related to space sustainability and can be presented to the Committee or Sub-committee for consideration alongside their usual reporting lines
6. To allow for the development of a substantive next step in the working group and enable expert led discussions to commence reflected through the LTS WG, a

pragmatic next step may be option 2) extend the current Working Group with a revisions to the Terms of reference, methods of work and workplan. The extension of the LTS WG shall be referred to as “LTS 2.5” noting “LTS 2.0” refers to the WG which initiated its workplan in 2022.

Extension to the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities

Objective:

7. Following the successful conclusion of the LTS 2.0 with a final report in 2026 the extension of the LTS WG as part of LTS 2.5 would enable expert-led discussions to be kicked off in earnest while maintaining the consideration of a WG and allow for a comprehensive plan for the next steps of the WG to be developed.
8. Therefore, the output of this phase of the WG will be a consolidated report reflecting recommendations from key thematic areas and a comprehensive plan for the next steps of the WG.

Method of Work:

9. The Working Group for LTS 2.5 will be led by the Chair and assisted by the Secretariat. It is hoped that due to his able leadership Dr. Umamaheswaran R. (India) during LTS 2.0 as the Chair would continue in his role for LTS 2.5
10. The Working Group for LTS 2.5 will meet during the annual sessions of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, with the benefit of interpretation services for formal meetings, and may request that time be granted to meet during the sessions of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
11. The Working Group for LTS 2.5 may decide, on an exceptional basis, to meet in the intersessional periods to advance its work. The scheduling of any such meetings will be agreed by the Member States in advance at the formal sessions and may include opportunities to participate online, if possible, so as to encourage maximum participation.
12. The Chair of the Working Group for LTS 2.5 shall establish appropriate means to interface with the initiatives which have space sustainability as part of their focus (e.g. the UAE Proposal for the Establishment of an Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness) and facilitate periodic reporting of findings to the WG of LTS 2.5
13. The Working Group for LTS 2.5 may decide to establish expert groups to allow for technical led discussions to focus on one or more of each of the agreed thematic areas identified in the final report of LTS 2.0 in order to expedite the work of the Working Group as a whole.
14. For themes identified in the final report that are potentially not as mature and are not covered through other initiatives, the WG may consider establishing “focus groups”. The focus groups would allow for technical discussions involving experts to further explore the thematic areas not discussed by other COPUOS initiatives but have been

identified and agreed for additional consideration in the final report of LTS 2.0. Importantly the focus groups may then act as a potential predecessor for future expert groups on key themes identified in the final report of LTS 2.0. The focus groups may take the form of focused technical sessions held during the annual sessions of STSC and COPUOS. The focus groups should include relevant experts from Member States and permanent observers, in addition to relevant non-governmental and private sector experts, nominated by their respective Member States. The focus groups could meet for example over 1 or 2 days and would discuss a specific thematic area agreed for additional consideration in the final report of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities and not covered by other initiatives. The focus group discussion would be Chaired by the Chair of the WG for LTS 2.5 and be supported by an expert facilitator and supported by the secretariat (see Annex A indicative schedule for meetings held during the extension of the LTS WG (LTS 2.5) for annual sessions of STSC and COPUOS Meeting). In addition, focus groups could also decide to meet intersessionally should they see the need for further discussion.

Workplan:

15. Following the successful conclusion of the LTS 2.0 with a final report in 2026 the extension of the LTS WG (LTS 2.5) could be 2 years (2026 to 2028). The timings for LTS 2.5 would align the workplan to the initiatives being discussed (or recently established) within COPUOS and its subcommittees which have space sustainability as part of their focus e.g. the UAE Proposal for the Establishment of an Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness, ATLAC on-going potential discussions on the inclusion of lunar orbital and surface debris mitigation/prevention as a priority topic to be addressed and the Group of Friends on Dark and Quiet Skies.

16. A potential workplan is shown:

Proposed Workplan for Extended LTS WG (“LTS 2.5”)		
Year	Meeting	Aim
2026	COPUOS	<p>Discussion on comprehensive plan for the next steps of the WG to be developed</p> <p>Updates to WG from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness • ATLAC • Group of Friends on Dark and Quiet Skies

Proposed Workplan for Extended LTS WG (“LTS 2.5”)		
Year	Meeting	Aim
		Focus Group Meetings on thematic topic
2027	STSC	<p>Discussion on comprehensive plan for the next steps of the WG to be developed</p> <p>Updates to WG from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness • ATLAC • Group of Friends on Dark and Quiet Skies <p>Focus Group Meetings on thematic topic</p>
2027	UNISPACE IV	<p>Discussion on comprehensive plan for the next steps of the WG to be developed</p> <p>Updates to WG from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness (Draft Recommendations) • ATLAC • Group of Friends on Dark and Quiet Skies <p>Focus Group Meetings on thematic topic</p>
2028	STSC	<p>Discussion on comprehensive plan for the next steps of the WG to be developed</p> <p>Updates to WG from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness (Draft Recommendations) • ATLAC • Group of Friends on Dark and Quiet Skies <p>Focus Group Meetings on thematic topic</p>

Proposed Workplan for Extended LTS WG (“LTS 2.5”)		
Year	Meeting	Aim
2028	COPUOS	Agreement on report on Consolidated Recommendations on Key Thematic Areas

Annex A – Indicative schedule for meetings held during the extension of the LTS WG for annual sessions of STSC and COPUOS

Indicated schedule:

- Day 1: Informal during lunch break to whole of the LTS WG
- Day 2: First all-day meeting for focus group on thematic area
- Day 3: Second all-day meeting for focus group on thematic area
- Day 4: Informal during lunch break to whole of the LTS WG on key outputs of the focus group discussions
- Day 5: Informal during lunch break on comprehensive plan for the next steps of the WG