

AGENDA ITEM 13

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF SPACE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

STATEMENT BY EMILY PIERCE, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

MARCH 22, 2023

Chair, as the United States has noted in this and other fora, the outer space environment has grown increasingly congested. As the volume and diversity of activities in space continue to increase, the chance for a collision rises along with it. As space activities evolve, the norms, rules, and principles that guide outer space activities also must evolve.

As set out in the U.S. Space Priorities Framework issued in December 2021 by the National Space Council, chaired by Vice President Kamala Harris, the United States is focused on bolstering space situational awareness and sharing space traffic coordination information. Working with industry, academia, and international partners, the United States will lead in the development and implementation of open, transparent, and credible standards, policies, and practices that establish the foundation for space traffic coordination among nations.

As we have noted before, the U.S. Department of Defense is currently authorized by statute to share space situational awareness (SSA) information and services with non-U.S. governmental entities to improve the safety and sustainability of space flight. The United States provides national contact information, information on on-orbit spacecraft operations, conjunction assessments, and the monitoring of objects and events in outer space. Much of this information is available on a free, publicly available, internet-based space catalogue at space-track.org. The United States welcomes coordination with all Member States, as clear lines of communication are necessary to mitigate the risk of, and facilitate effective responses to orbital collisions, orbital break ups, and other events that might increase the probability of accidental collisions or may pose a risk to human safety, property, or the environment.

Further, the United States remains committed to transparency in outer space and in this regard meets its obligations under the Outer Space Treaty and the Registration Convention. Taking into consideration the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolutions 1721B (XVI) and 62/101, the United States also continues to develop and implement effective and comprehensive registration practices. This includes improving the timeliness and quality of our registration filings, which is an increasingly complex task, due to the growth in the

number and diversity of space actors and the multinational nature of many space objects.

Chair, the United States continues to implement Space Policy Directive 3, National Space Traffic Management Policy, and remains committed to advancing SSA and STM science and technology, providing federally-supported basic SSA data and STM services to the public, and improving SSA data interoperability to enable greater SSA data sharing.

As part of these implementation efforts, the United States Government is accelerating the transition of responsibilities for the provision of civil space traffic coordination information and services to the Department of Commerce, which is developing its Traffic Coordination System for Space (TraCSS) to share SSA information and continue to provide basic spaceflight safety services to civil and commercial space operators. TraCSS will leverage data and services provided from a variety of government, commercial, academic, and international sources. The Department of Commerce is also working closely with colleagues in the U.S. Government and in industry to conduct pilot programs and initiate acquisitions that will enable the new SSA system to reach initial operations in 2024.

These efforts are complemented by the active participation of U.S. government and industry experts in the development of technical standards for

space traffic coordination and related information exchanges through such bodies as the International Organization for Standardization and the Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems.

Chair, continued international dialogue and coordination of efforts by Member States to provide space traffic coordination services can also support broader efforts by the Committee to strengthen global governance of space activities. In this regard, the United States will continue to engage the international community to uphold and strengthen a rules-based international order for space. The United States, working with other governments, international intergovernmental organizations and the private sector will promote the implementation of existing measures and lead in the development of new measures that contribute to the safety, stability, security, and long-term sustainability of space activities. The United States will demonstrate how space activities can be conducted in a responsible, peaceful, and sustainable manner.

In the meantime, we look forward to hearing from other delegations about their approaches to and perspectives on these important challenges.

Thank you, Chair.