

United Kingdom, Item 10

Legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The United Kingdom is pleased to again have the opportunity to provide our views on the legal aspects associated with space resource utilisation (SRU). The United Kingdom recognises the importance and benefit of building an international consensus with regards to space resource utilisation as a vital pillar of the safe exploration of the Solar System for all humankind.

As expressed at as part of our submission to the Working Group in late 2022, the UK believes that COPUOS can, and should, focus on 'in-situ space resources' use while also focusing on practical measures for wider SRU activities.

The UK believes a key practical measure would be Member States sharing information on their planned activities in relation to SRU activities, including the nature, conduct and location.

The UK is supporting the communication requirements for future for lunar missions with £50 million of funding as part of the ESA Moonlight programme. This will allow future astronauts, rovers, science experiments and other equipment to communicate, share large amounts of data including high-definition video, and navigate safely across the lunar surface. This will be a crucial part of enabling safe space resource activities in the future.

With the future work of the Working Group, the UK maintains the view that radio waves or geostationary orbit slots fall under the remit of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and should not be a focus of the Working Group.

Madam Chair,

The United Kingdom is a proud signatory of both the Outer Space Treaty, as the foundation of the global governance of outer space, and the Artemis Accords because we fully recognise the opportunity that utilising resources in space affords us and the wider international community. In-situ space resources will help us unlock deep space exploration, propel scientific research, help us to craft the tools and technologies of the future and, ultimately, enable humans to live, work and sustain life on the lunar surface and other celestial bodies. An important part of facilitating future missions is understanding the environment of the lunar surface. The UK is

supporting this with the Open University developing the Exospheric Mass Spectrometer which will measure the water and other molecules in the atmosphere of the Moon as part of an Artemis support mission in 2023.

The United Kingdom recognises that while there is currently no viable commercial model for the extraction of space resources and returning them to Earth for sale, States and national space agencies may still benefit from having commercial arrangements in place to support scientific investigation such as utilisation of non-governmental entities to return lunar regolith to Earth for scientific investigation. The United Kingdom agrees with this position as compatible with Article I and the use of SRU in support of science and exploration.

Madam Chair,

Finally, the United Kingdom is supportive of the proposals for a dedicated international conference to discuss issues surrounding Space Resource Utilization in 2024. We wish to thank the Chair Andrzej Misztal and the Vice Chair Steven Freeland, for their excellent leadership of the working group.

Thank you Madam Chair.

