

United Kingdom, Item 11

Legal mechanisms relating to space debris and remediation measures at the 61st Legal Sub-committee of COPUOS

Chair, Distinguished delegates,

The UK delegation is pleased to have this opportunity to share with you the progress and developments we have made in the past year.

The UK government believes that the growing volume of debris in space is both environmentally and commercially unsustainable, requiring swift and shared action to clean up Earth orbit. The UK is committed to promoting the sustainable use of space for all and welcomes collaboration and discussion on how we can work together to tackle the issue of space debris. We recognise our responsibility in this area and endeavour to play an active leading role in developing international best practice for the long-term sustainability of outer space.

The UK has incorporated internationally recognised guidelines and standards relating to space debris into national legislation. Under the provisions of the Space Industry Act, the regulator must take account of debris mitigation guidelines issued by international organisations for orbital licences. All objects licensed by the UK meet international space

debris mitigation guidelines, including requiring that satellites in Low Earth Orbit are de-orbited within 25 years of the mission ending. The UK Space Agency is also exploring whether these standards should be updated in light of the increasingly congested orbital environment.

At the 4th Summit for Space Sustainability in June 2022, co-hosted by the UK Government, the UK announced plans for a review of the UK's regulatory framework for orbital activities. Our Space Industry Act provides a high-level regulatory framework which is flexible and can accommodate a wide range of orbital activities. The UK is developing detailed regulatory frameworks to enable innovations in active debris removal, in-orbit servicing and manufacturing. We continue to work with international partners to develop a collaborative regime which prioritises sustainability and facilitates active debris removal missions to help to clean up the orbital environment and ensure the future use of space for all. In addition, in October 2022, the UK government committed not to destructively test direct ascent anti-satellite (DA-ASAT) missiles; one of the key sources of debris in Low Earth Orbit. The UK also continues to be a strong advocate for the important work performed by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC).

Looking ahead, the UK's regulatory frameworks will support the UK national active debris mission which aims to remove two unprepared, UK licenced objects from orbit in 2026.

The UK recently has fully implemented its comprehensive policy on the registration of space objects. We believe good registration practice is the foundation for enabling active debris removal and in-orbit servicing missions, and that transparency and international collaboration will be essential to the success of these missions.

Thank you chair.