

**Statement by Ambassador Laura S.H. Holgate, U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Vienna, COPUOS Legal Subcommittee
Agenda Item 4 – General Exchange of Views
April 16, 2024**

Thank you, Chair. The United States congratulates you on your election and looks forward to working with you for a successful session. We thank Director Aarti Holla-Maini and the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs for their work preparing for this session.

When U.S. President Lyndon Johnson transmitted the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 to the U.S. Senate for ratification, he wrote, “In the next decade and in all decades to come, the capabilities of nations in space will multiply far beyond our comprehension today.” Because the Treaty drafters foresaw a future with untold potential for human activity in space, they wisely designed the Treaty as the cornerstone of an enduring international legal framework, not only for those space activities in development at the dawn of the space age but also for those activities not yet imagined. This framework of the four core treaties on outer space has enabled an ever-increasing number and diversity of nations, international organizations, and private entities to thrive, through the safe and sustainable exploration and use of space.

For the United States, this framework and our obligations under it focus our attention on maintaining our domestic governance to keep pace with technological advancements. In November 2023, the White House transmitted to the U.S. Congress a legislative proposal to enhance our domestic regulatory framework for space activities. If passed into law, it will provide clearer pathways for the authorization and supervision of in-space activities, as well as the regulatory certainty U.S. companies need to continue to operate safely and sustainably. In the interim, the National Space Council adopted the U.S. Novel Space Activities Authorization and Supervision Framework, a companion policy that supports U.S. Departments and Agencies in preparing for and shaping this future regulatory environment. We will share more details on this in a technical presentation on April 23.

Even as we focus on *enhancing* our domestic space law, we would like to share important developments in the enforcement of *existing* law and regulation.

In October 2023, the Federal Communications Commission announced a settlement of its investigation of a U.S. company for failure to properly deorbit a satellite, which included agreement to a compliance plan and financial penalty. We look forward to sharing more information about this enforcement action in a technical presentation on April 18.

Additionally, the United States continues to facilitate space sustainability by providing space situational awareness information and services to all that request it. We are making significant progress on transitioning this service to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and we look forward to sharing more information on our progress and our vision for future international coordination during Agenda Item 12.

Chair, over the last year, 14 additional countries have signed the Artemis Accords, bringing the number of signatories to 37. The Accords are a non-binding set of principles that enhance governance of the civil exploration and use of outer space, including guidance for operational implementation of several key obligations under the Outer Space Treaty. In October 2023, Signatories announced their intent to provide certain lunar mission data parameters to the United Nations, consistent with our obligations under Article XI of the Outer Space Treaty. The United States followed this coordinated approach and submitted information to UNOOSA for scientific payloads that were carried on commercial spacecraft earlier this year under the NASA Commercial Lunar Payload Services project.

Chair, even as we work in this body to uphold international law and global governance of human activities in the peaceful uses and exploration of outer space, the very foundation of the rules-based international system on our planet is under assault by one member of this Committee. Not only is Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine a clear violation of international law, but in the course of waging its war, members of Russia's forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine. Satellite imagery has contributed compelling evidence that will help the international community hold Russia to account for these atrocities. In light of Russia's ongoing aggression, any affiliation between the United Nations and the proposed regional center for space science and technology education in the Russian Federation remains wholly inappropriate.

Chair, President Johnson's 1967 letter to the U.S. Senate said the Treaty reflects the hope "that the realms of space should forever remain the realms of peace." The United States, together with Japan, has recently engaged the United Nations Security Council to support our shared goal of preventing an arms race in outer space by focusing on the dangers of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in outer space. The draft Security Council resolution sends a clear, unequivocal – and uncontroversial – message of the need to carry out all outer space activities in full compliance with international law, including the UN Charter. The resolution affirms longstanding, clear, and fundamental obligations of States Parties under the Outer Space Treaty. In this context, Article IV and its prohibitions related to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are vital. Affirming this obligation, as this resolution does, reaffirms the central role of the Outer Space Treaty in fulfilling the vision of maintaining outer space as a realm of peace. This was not only the vision of President Johnson, but also the vision of this very Subcommittee when it negotiated the Outer Space Treaty nearly 60 years ago.

Thank you, Chair.