

**AGENDA ITEM 8
FUTURE ROLE AND METHOD OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

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

April 24, 2024

Chair, the United States would first like to express its appreciation to the Secretariat and you, Chair, for all the effort in organizing this session, especially as this is the first year of our streamlined agenda. My delegation has found the sequential order of agenda item topics to be a welcome change that has fostered both predictability and a steady pace of discussion.

We also express appreciation to the Romanian delegation for organizing informal consultations on the Action Team on Lunar Activities Coordination (ATLAC). The United States looks forward to working with the Action Team to promote the sustainable and beneficial use and exploration of space for all of humanity.

My delegation would like to recognize and highlight the value of nongovernmental and private sector observers to this and other bodies of UNCOPUOS. As we know, the issues we cover in our subcommittees and full committee are complex, and the diplomats and lawyers in the room can benefit from the expertise and unique perspectives provided by academia, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations.

We share the view expressed that the dilution or undermining of UNCOPUOS should be avoided, including by the creation of unnecessarily duplicative mandates in other UN fora, which would undercut this Committee's recognized technical, policy, and legal expertise in international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

In this regard, we were disappointed to hear another delegation mischaracterize General Assembly Resolution 78/20, which establishes a second Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.” While UNCOPUOS remains focused on its long-standing consensus mandate regarding international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, multiple consensus General Assembly resolutions have noted that the Conference on Disarmament and UN Disarmament Commission can advance transparency and confidence-building measures (or TCBMs) specifically for security-related space activities.

It is well-recognized that there are complementarities. For example, more than a decade ago, the 2013 Group of Governmental Experts on TCBMs noted that the UNCOPUOS Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities *quote*, “will have characteristics similar to those of transparency and confidence-building measures; some of them could be considered as potential transparency and confidence-building measures, while others could provide the technical basis for the implementation of certain transparency and confidence-building measures proposed by this Group of Governmental Experts” *end quote*.

As four joint panel discussions of the General Assembly First and Fourth Committees on “possible challenges to space security and sustainability” have since underscored, efforts on space sustainability and TCBMs are mutually reinforcing. It is also worth noting that resolution 78/20 specifically welcomes UNCOPUOS’ work on the implementation of the 21 guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

As such, we urge all nations to participate constructively in the second OEWG on reducing space threats when it convenes in 2025. This can ensure the group remains focused on its task of considering how norms, rules and principles of responsible behavior could reduce the chance of misunderstanding or miscalculation as well as the risk of unintended escalation or conflict.

Chair, my delegation would also like to note its appreciation for the “Summit of the Future” and “Pact for the Future” processes in New York, and in particular thank the delegations of Germany and Namibia for serving as co-facilitators. We continue to advocate for highlighting the unique role of UNCOPUOS in promoting and advancing the global governance of outer space activities. We also appreciate UNOOSA and Austria’s organization of a constructive exchange on “Space and the Summit of the Future” during the World Space Forum in December 2023. The United States looks forward to participating in the conference, “Management and Sustainability of Outer Space Activities,” that Portugal, in coordination with UNOOSA, is convening in Lisbon next month.

The United States also wishes to express its appreciation for the statement by the Ukrainian delegation under this agenda item. We believe that elements of their proposal could be better considered in the STSC in the context of the current Working Group on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

Chair, in conclusion, the United States remains committed to the essential work of UNCOPUOS and its Subcommittees and looks forward to fostering a more sustainable and peaceful future in outer space with our fellow member states.

Thank you Chair.