

Agenda item 4 – **General Exchange of Views**

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates, good morning. Mr Chair, thank you for giving me the floor.

Let me start by congratulating you, Mr Chair, with your election. My government has full confidence that you will guide us through a successful session of the Sub-Committee. I would also like to express our gratitude and great appreciation to the Director of UNOOSA, Aarti Holla-Maini, and the Secretariat on their excellent work in preparation of this session.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself fully with the statement of the European Union, and would like to state the following in its national capacity.

Mr Chair, the Legal Sub-Committee, by promoting and developing the legal regime applicable to Outer Space, that is the Five UN treaties on Outer Space, it contributes to the safety and long-term sustainability of outer space.

My Government would like to take this opportunity to mark cross cutting concerns that are of particular importance to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Kingdom of the Netherlands believes that these concerns can, and should, be addressed through adequate regulation. This regulation can be achieved through binding and non-binding measures, combining rules and responsible behaviours and the sharing of information and best practices. An excellent example of successful non-binding instruments are the Artemis Accords, to which the Netherlands became a signatory on 1 November 2023.

The main cross-cutting issue is freedom of access to outer space. With an increasing importance of space technology for our daily lives, an increase in space activities, and an increase in space faring nations and space operators, ensuring equitable access is increasingly important. To ensure access, a number of measures must be put in place. First, physical access must be ensured. This calls for adequate Space Traffic Management, and, perhaps more importantly, for robust endeavours to decrease *space debris*. Second, sustained access must be ensured. This calls for the prevention of occupation in outer space, and also the adequate regulation of space resources activities. Finally, peaceful access must be ensured. This calls for proper registration of space activities, pre-launch and post-launch. Of critical importance are transparency and confidence building measures.

For the purpose of the freedom of access to outer space, the following agenda-items are of particular importance.

First, as to the **Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space**, the sharing of information about space activities is crucial for the safe and sustainable use of outer space, and the avoidance of conflict. In that regard, the Kingdom of the Netherlands reiterates its concern with the absence of a proper and unified format for the registration of space activities, including post-launch activities. The practice of registration under the five UN Treaties on Outer Space has not kept up with developments.

Second, as to the **potential legal models on space resources activities**, the Kingdom of the Netherlands expresses its hope that the working group will be able to deliver on its promise, and that we will be able to work towards an enabling regime, that combines the promotion of pioneering with the prevention of a first-come-first-serve. My Government considers the Building Blocks adopted by the The Hague International Space Resources Working Group as offering an excellent starting point for the discussions, and would, again, strongly recommend them to the members of the Sub-committee. In addition, by signing the Artemis Accords, my Government underlines the

values we share in space with the other signatories, and we acknowledge, and take seriously, our common responsibility. Accordingly, the Artemis Accords may also be conducive to the constructive regulation of space resources activities.

Third, concerning **space traffic management, space debris mitigation and remediation, and small satellite activities**, the Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to take this opportunity again to express its support for the Long Term Sustainability Guidelines and the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, and standards developed by the International Organisation for Standardisation and the European Coordination for Space Standardization. The Netherlands stimulates its satellite operators to comply with these guidelines and standards in their missions. In line with its national space law, my Government prefers a approach that ensures technological neutrality, in particular in view of the rapid development of space technology. Indeed, these topics, and in particular Space Traffic Management, have an inherently geopolitical character. Therefore, it is addressed most effectively and efficiently through a global approach. It is for that reason also, that the Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the development of space legislation within the European Union, based on safety, resilience and sustainability.

Considering the desirability of a consolidated approach towards a safe and sustainable use of Outer Space, now and in future, my delegation would reiterate its invitation to the Members of this Committee to consider to join the topics of Space Traffic Management, Space Debris Mitigation, and Small Satellites. This would enhance the efficiency of this Committee, by the development of guidelines, best practices, norms and rules that, together, would enhance the safe and sustainable use of outer space.

Finally, Mr Chair, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is the host State of the International Court of Justice, and has a constitutional obligation to promote the development of the international legal order. This compels the Kingdom of the Netherlands to stress the importance of Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty: the prohibition on the placement of objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction. For that reason, the Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the development by Japan and the United States of the resolution in the United Nations Security Council calling on all States not to deploy or develop nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in outer space. Equally, my government wishes to recall that the prohibition of aggression is a peremptory norm of international law. States must respect other States' territorial sovereignty and political independence. The Russian Federation must stop its war of aggression against Ukraine. It is only through friendly relations and cooperation between States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, on earth and in space, that we may ensure a sustainable universe now, and for future generations.

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates. I thank you for your attention.