

Sixty-third Session

of the Legal Subcommittee

of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Agenda item 6

Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space, and ways and means, including capacity-building, to promote their implementation

Statement by Ms. Ulrike Nguyen, Austria

16 April 2024

Mister Chair,

Austria is a State Party to all five UN treaties on outer space. The active engagement of an increasing number of states in space activities shows the unabated relevance of the five treaties for the conduct of human activities in outer space. We therefore encourage all other States to ratify the treaties, including the Moon Agreement. We believe that effective implementation is key for the success of treaties, even though the principles drawn up therein have been created several decades ago. It is primarily through cooperation in international fora and enactment of national space legislation that the States Parties to the five treaties must ensure their relevance in the 21st century.

Mister Chair,

At its sixty-sixth session in 2023, the Committee agreed to merge the items on *“Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space”*, *“National legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space”* and *“Capacity-building in space law”* into a single item entitled *“Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space, and ways and means, including capacity-building, to promote their implementation”*.

Austria attaches great importance to all aspects of the implementation of the five United Nations treaties on outer space, which have been merged into the agenda item currently under consideration. We would like to stress once more that the new agenda item encompasses all issues relating to national space legislation and capacity-building in space law, which previously were considered in separate agenda items. This also applies to discussions on all three of these topics in the Working Group.

Mister Chair,

Austria considers capacity-building in space law as an important part of its engagement on outer space and its endeavour to fully implement its obligations under the five United Nations treaties on outer space. Austria is convinced that any engagement in space activities should be combined with the respective legal knowledge necessary to meet the requirements of the long-term and responsible use of outer space.

Education and capacity-building in space law serve to train the next generation of lawyers, scientist and engineers. It can be done at various levels and in various forms. On the one hand, space law can be included in the curriculum of law studies at universities. On the other hand, short-term educational events and project-oriented activities can provide capacity-building in space law, also for non-lawyers.

In Austria, the Law Faculties at the universities of Vienna, Graz, Linz and Salzburg offer specialized courses and seminars dedicated to space law. Furthermore, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action supports the activities of the National Point of Contact for Space Law (NPOC) of the European Centre for Space Law (ECSL) at the University of Vienna.

The NPOC contributes to the activities of the ECSL, such as the ECSL Summer Course on Space Law and Policy, the Young Lawyers Symposium, the Practitioners' Forum and the European Rounds of the Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court Competition. Just last week, the NPOC had the great pleasure of hosting this year's European Rounds of the Moot Court here in Vienna. Furthermore, for the third time the NPOC has organised the Austrian Space Law Essay Competition, with great success.

Cooperation between faculties of law and universities of technology or universities of applied sciences can be beneficial in both ways. While legal experts should be invited to give scientists and engineers a basic understanding of space law, law students also benefit from guest lectures of experts in space science and technology. Such cooperation, which some Austrian universities are already implementing, needs to be promoted further. It appropriately reflects the interdisciplinary character of capacity-building in space law.

Thank you, Mr. Chair!