

United Kingdom, Item 9 - Legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources

Mr Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The United Kingdom is pleased to have the opportunity to provide our views on the legal aspects associated with space resources.

The United Kingdom understands the importance of space resources for our exploration goals. In the past year, the United Kingdom published its Lunar Exploration Technology Roadmap, highlighting the importance of in-situ resource utilisation (ISRU) in helping humanity unlock deep space exploration and propel scientific research. We are proud to have funded, alongside Canada, the Aqualunar Challenge, a £1.2m international challenge prize focused on making human habitation in space possible by finding ways to purify water buried beneath the Moon's surface.

The Outer Space Treaty (OST) is the foundation of the global governance of outer space and should also be the foundation of our discussion on space resources. The UK is also a proud signatory of the Artemis Accords, which contains principles for the peaceful exploration of the Moon consistent with the OST. As we seek to develop norms for the peaceful, safe, and sustainable use and exploration of the Moon, we should ensure that they are in line with the OST.

The UK welcomes the views of all Member States on the topic of space resource utilisation and stresses the importance of finding consensus on this topic, ensuring the potential of space resources to support humankind's peaceful exploration of our solar system is realised.

Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom places great importance in the work of the Working Group on Space Resources and we have listened closely to the range of views from member states, experts, and civil society. The UK supports the chairs proposal for discussions at this session. The UK would also like to suggest the proposal, in line with the agreed workplan, of a structure for the subsequent LSC sessions to aid progress in the discussions towards a draft set of principles. This should include time to scope future developments of space resources activities for further discussion beyond 2027, as outlined in the workplan.

As outlined in our CRP submitted before the last session of the LSC, the UK believes that the working group should focus its activities on extractable and/or recoverable in situ resources in outer space.

The UK agrees that solar radiation, spectrum, and orbital slots are important resources for space exploration. However, the UK believes these to be outside of scope of the Working Group and are covered by discussions in other fora such as the ITU.

The UK believes transparency should be a key principle for any framework on the exploration, exploitation, and utilisation of space resources. Member States should share information on their planned activities in relation to such activities, including their nature, conduct and location to the extent appropriate in avoiding harmful interference with other missions. The UK also believes that it is important for any Framework to consider the impacts of space resource activities on other developing areas of international discussion such as lunar sustainability, lunar heritage, and planetary protection.

The United Kingdom recognises that there is currently no viable commercial model for the extraction of space resources and returning them to Earth for sale. However, in accordance with the Outer Space Treaty States and national space agencies may still benefit from having commercial arrangements in place to support scientific investigation such as utilisation of non-governmental entities to return lunar regolith to Earth for scientific investigation.

Mr Chair,

Finally, we wish to thank the Chair Andrzej Misztal and the Vice Chair Steven Freeland, for their excellent leadership of the working group. We look forward to working with them to further develop the framework on space resources in future.

Thank you Chair.