

**Agenda Item 10: General exchange of information on non-legally binding UN instruments
on outer space**

Chair,

The United Kingdom is pleased to participate in this important discussion on non-legally binding UN instruments on outer space.

These instruments are crucial in developing the multilateral governance framework for space. They offer a flexible, low-risk and effective approach to adapting to new uses of outer space and addressing the dynamic challenges of outer space activities.

Chair,

Non-binding instruments have always been pivotal in shaping the behaviour of space-faring nations and contributing to the development of the UN space treaties. They have helped to shape multilateral norms, build consensus, and enable incremental progress on complex and contested issues.

The Outer Space Treaty, which is the cornerstone of international space law, began life as a set of non-binding Principles aimed at creating a shared understanding of how States should behave in a new area of human activity. This very Committee drafted and negotiated the texts that were ultimately adopted by the UN General Assembly by consensus in 1963 as the Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space. Years later, once views and practice had settled, these Principles were formalised as legally binding obligations in the Outer Space Treaty.

This pathway to legally binding obligation via non-binding instruments helped to navigate the geopolitical differences at the time and provided the framework within which the peaceful exploration and use of outer space could continue despite those differences.

More recently, a range of guidelines have been developed on space debris mitigation, long-term sustainability of space activities and the use of nuclear power sources in space. These non-binding instruments help to ensure the protection and sustainability of the space environment and of human life. The United Kingdom has incorporated these guidelines into our national space policies and regulatory frameworks. We support ongoing efforts to

update and refine these non-binding instruments in light of new technological advancements and continue to advocate for their widespread adoption.

Chair,

Non-binding instruments can interact with and build upon the existing legal framework in a number of ways. They can:

- Complement the existing legal framework by providing implementing detail to the otherwise broad and high-level Outer Space Treaty.
- Assist in interpreting key terms and provisions of the UN Space Treaties, such as due regard or harmful interference.
- Act as precursors to future treaties by generating consensus on standards or ways of interacting in space, especially on complex topics with diverse interests.
- Generate state practice and *opinio juris*, which may over time become customary international law.

The United Kingdom places great importance on non-binding instruments on outer space and seeks to act consistently with them. We commend the efforts of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Subcommittee in developing and promoting such instruments, which have a key role to play in navigating the new challenges and opportunities we face in space today.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom reaffirms its commitment to the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space. We will continue to support the development and implementation of non-binding instruments that promote responsible space activities and international cooperation in outer space.

Thank you, Chair.