

Canada**Agenda Item 3 –General exchange of views****Delivered by: Curtis Schmeichel, Global Affairs Canada**

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Legal Subcommittee
Sixty-fourth session, Vienna, May 5-16, 2025

Thank you Chair,

The Canadian Delegation welcomes you back as the Chair of the Legal Subcommittee for its 64th session and looks forward to your leadership as we engage in discussions regarding some of the most interesting and important issues facing the peaceful exploration and use of outer space today. Rest assured that Canada is ready to actively engage on these issues.

Canada commends the Secretariat and the Director of UNOOSA, for all the hard work that went into the preparations for this session. Your efforts are sincerely appreciated.

Chair, Distinguished delegates,

The exploration and use of outer space is the province of all humankind, which means everyone can use and explore outer space regardless of their degree of economic or scientific development. The four core UN treaties on outer space, the Outer Space Treaty, the Rescue and Return Agreement, the Liability Convention, and the Registration Convention, establish this right and many others that are crucial to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. Adherence to and implementation of these treaties is essential for ensuring that humanity continues to enjoy the benefits that outer space activities can deliver. Canada calls upon all Member States of COPUOS to become party to the four core UN treaties on outer space and to promote universal

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adherence to these treaties. All States are affected by outer space activities and therefore, all States should be operating under a common legal framework to promote the safety, security, and sustainability of outer space activities now and in the future.

The existing legal framework governing outer space activities was developed within COPUOS. This remarkable feat was accomplished by focusing on the elaboration of broad principles of general application. These general principles were first agreed through UN General Assembly resolutions and then transformed into the four core UN treaties on outer space. This approach was tremendously successful, resulting in treaties that enabled fantastic innovation in the exploration and use of outer space over the decades that followed their adoption. Almost 60 years later, the legal framework developed by COPUOS continues to serve as the foundation for humanity's activities in outer space.

Today, just as in the early 1960s, novel space activities are being planned and implemented, such as missions to the Moon and the search for vital space resources to sustain humanity's exploration of the cosmos. There are also challenges to address. Earth orbit has become crowded and dangerous, with thousands of satellites operating in all directions and hazardous debris scattered throughout all orbits. To deal with both new opportunities and challenges, COPUOS should follow the approach it pioneered with such great success. This subcommittee should focus on practical issues rather

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than theoretical debates. It should focus on general legal principles that create a flexible framework within which actors can develop creative solutions to achieve new milestones and overcome emerging challenges rather than engage in prolonged discussions over minute details and definitions.

This approach is being employed by the working group on Space Resource Activities. While we are saddened by the loss of the Chair of the working group, Andrzej Misztal, we are pleased with the draft set of recommended principles compiled by the Vice Chair, Steven Freeland, whom we commend for his diligence and persistence in the face of adversity. Canada is optimistic that the working group will succeed in elucidating practical legal guidance on an important matter and in so doing, demonstrate that COPUOS can maintain its reputation as a competent intergovernmental body that delivers real results. Results that are needed by the international community to enable the continued exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Finally, in its quest to deliver those results, COPUOS and its subcommittees should be open to input and ideas from all sources. No one committee or organization has a monopoly on good ideas. For example, the COPUOS Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines were heavily influenced by the work of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee. Several of the current items on the agenda of the LSC were

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inspired by symposia organized by the European Centre for Space Law and the International Institute of Space Law. These examples illustrate that contributions from outside of the COPUOS can inspire and enrich its work. Therefore, COPUOS and its Subcommittees should remain open to and encourage contributions from academia, civil society, private industry, and relevant international organizations.

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Outer space has been a constant symbol of cooperation and peace, where nations set aside their differences for the sake of mutual achievement and the betterment of humanity through the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. Canada hopes that this spirit of cooperation and peace will continue to prevail both in outer space, and in this Subcommittee.

It remains extremely concerning that our session once again takes place against the backdrop of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. As we have repeatedly stated, Russia's actions directly undermine global peace and security as well as international law and run contrary to our collective efforts to advance the peaceful uses of outer space.

Thank you.