

## **AGENDA ITEM 9**

### **GENERAL EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND VIEWS ON LEGAL MECHANISMS RELATING TO SPACE DEBRIS MITIGATION MEASURES, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE WORK OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE**

#### **STATEMENT BY KATIE KING, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE**

**May XX, 2025**

Chair, the United States welcomes the continued exchange of information regarding legal mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation measures. The United States has long recognized the importance of mitigating the creation and effects of space debris and supports efforts to evolve those practices to ensure continued safety of space operations in the future.

The outer space activities carried out or licensed by the U.S. Government comply with a robust framework of statutes, regulations, and internal policies that take into account space debris mitigation, object tracking and characterization, from the design stage of a spacecraft or space launch system to its end-of-life disposal. Private sector space actors are also contributing important views to these conversations, especially as the

private sector develops innovative solutions to the challenges presented by space debris.

The United States continues to adhere to our U.S. Government Orbital Debris Mitigation Standard Practices (ODMSP), which are also referenced by U.S. regulatory agencies when regulating private sector space activities. Under this Framework, U.S. agencies are to evaluate the need to update the ODMSP every two years, the results of which we look forward to sharing at future Subcommittee sessions.

The Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) is recognized as the technical authority on orbital debris by the international community. As a founding member of the IADC, the United States has actively participated in all major IADC activities in the past, including measurements, modeling, impact protection, and the development of orbital debris mitigation best practices. The United States is committed to continuing our contributions to the IADC to improve the characterization of the ever-changing orbital debris environment and to assess ways to improve the IADC Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines to better preserve the near-Earth space environment for the safe operations of future space missions.

The United States continues to implement the UN COPUOS Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and the Long-Term Sustainability Guidelines

associated with minimizing and mitigating the effects of space debris because of our strong interest in the freedom to explore and use outer space, and our judgment that these practices represent sound approaches to debris mitigation.

Preventing the proliferation of space debris, especially through easily avoidable actions, like conducting destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing should be considered. This is not solely a security issue, as these actions can have significant impacts on the long-term sustainability of outer space.

Approaches to mitigation and object tracking and characterization are linked to evolving technologies. As technologies change, so too do the available methods for debris mitigation and object tracking and characterization as well as the cost-benefit tradeoffs of doing so. For example, we are confident that our Department of Commerce's TraCSS system will make avoiding collisions with debris easier for any operators who wish to avail- themselves of this safety-focused service. While we do not see the wisdom in codifying specific debris mitigation standards into international law at this time given the evolving technical aspects, we support the continued implementation by Member States and intergovernmental organizations of widely-agreed debris guidelines and best practices.

Safety and the right to explore and use space are of paramount importance for the United States, and we will continue to support wholeheartedly international cooperation to further debris mitigation technology and techniques.

Thank you, Chair.