

United Kingdom, Item 8 - 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. As a signatory of the Outer Space Treaty the United Kingdom *Recognises* the common interest of all Humankind in the progress of the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. *With the strong belief* that the exploration and use of outer space should be carried on for the benefit of all peoples irrespective of the degree of their economic or scientific development.

The United Kingdom understands the importance of space resources for our exploration goals. In the past year, the United Kingdom, alongside Canada, has funded, the Aqualunar Challenge, a £1.2m international challenge prize focused on making human habitation in space possible by driving the development of innovative technologies to finding ways to purify water buried beneath the Moon's surface. Space resources technologies like those developed as part of the AquaLunar Challenge will help us unlock deep space exploration, propel scientific research, help us to craft the tools and technologies of the future and, ultimately, enable humans to live, work and sustain life on the lunar surface and other celestial bodies.

The UK alongside over 50 other states is 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 must ensure they too are consistent with the OST.

The UK delegation was pleased to see the Zero draft of proposed principles on Space Resource Utilization and is supportive of the process outlined by the Acting - Chair of the Working Group on Space Resources. It is the United Kingdom's view that these draft principles set out a broadly balanced draft for high level principles representing the range of views presented from member states, experts, and civil society. Our delegation believes that the draft presents a viable basis for moving forward with our discussions, to ensuring the potential of space resources to support humankind's peaceful exploration of our solar system.

Chair

We welcome the broad agreement within the zero draft on many important issues. Without outlining an exhaustive list, we welcome principles on important areas such as, ensuring compliance with existing international law, definition of space resources, ensuring appropriate authorisation and supervision of non-government actors, safety, sustainability, information sharing, review and development of principles. Widespread support for these draft high-level principles is a positive step forward in our deliberations on space resource utilisation.

The United Kingdom believes it is important that these draft principles are shared widely for space actors to examine. An important next step for the working

group would be the publishing the zero draft for global civil society to submit their views for consideration by member states.

The United Kingdom believes that the additional principle 2E [The extraction of space resources [and/or the utilization of space resources do] does not inherently constitute national appropriation under Article II of the Outer Space Treaty.] should be added to the main body of the draft. This is to remove ambiguity that the extraction and use of space resources, in line with the draft principles, does not contravene Article II of the Outer Space Treaty.

It will also be important to recognise the importance to protect the scientific, and cultural heritage of lunar environment, particularly with regards to space resource extraction. The United Kingdom believes it is important that the draft space resources principles reflect the need to ensure that sites of specific scientific interest or sites of cultural or historical significance are protected appropriately for the benefit of future generations.

The UK believes that it is important that we have a mechanism beyond the workplan of the working group, for international discussions to continue once we have agreed draft principles. Space resources is a rapidly developing field that covers a varied array of activities, and operations may take place in a wide range of space environments. We will need to ensure there are opportunities for the principles to evolve as our understanding of Space Resources and associated mission architectures grow, creating new regulatory policy needs. The United Kingdom views the zero draft as an important step in agreeing principles for the extraction of space resources.

Finally, we would like to thank Acting chair Stephen Freeland for his tireless work within the working group and on the Zero draft and offer him our full support as we move forward in our discussions.