

Submission by Norway on the Mandate and Purpose for the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resources Activities

Norway welcomes the establishment of the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities.

With reference to the invitation by the Chair and Vice-Chair to provide information on the mandate and purpose of the working group, Norway submits the following initial reflections and look forward to the exchange of views during the upcoming session of the Legal Subcommittee.

From Norway's perspective, it will be important to agree on a clear definition of what constitutes a space resource, and what falls outside such a definition. Issues currently under the mandate of other international organizations should not be included within the scope of the working group.

The working group should examine potential legal models for the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resource activities on celestial bodies. Furthermore, ownership to resources and the issue of both in-situ use and issues related to the transfer of resources back to Earth are important aspects to look at. In addition, activities relating to sampling, surveying and mapping should be considered. Access to and sharing of data pertaining to resource activities on celestial bodies should also be a topic examined by the working group.

Regarding the type of information to be collected, the working group should consider looking to other governance frameworks which could serve as lessons learned or inspiration for how to govern space resources. The achievements of the International Seabed Authority governing the extraction and future exploitation of mineral resources from the seabed in areas beyond national jurisdiction, would be of particular relevance. The working group should identify and examine mechanisms which will ensure that space resource activities are conducted in a safe, sustainable and peaceful manner in the interest and to the benefit of all countries, irrespective of their economic or scientific development.

At present, there is no consensus regarding the interpretation of the international legal framework pertaining to space resource activities. Norway would support the development of a UN legal framework that promotes predictable, transparent conditions for the safe, sustainable and peaceful activities on celestial bodies. We would also encourage the working group to take account of, and potentially contribute to the clarification of, any existing international regulation applicable to space resource activities. To avoid fragmentation and to ensure the relevance of COPUOS, it is crucial that the working group succeeds in promoting a common understanding of the way forward, including the proposal of principles, and potential rules and norms for space resource activities.

When it comes to the dedicated conference scheduled for 2024, Norway is of the opinion that participation should be open to all interested stakeholders.