

United Kingdom, Item 13

UK Statement – STSC – Agenda Item 13 - Future Role

Chair,

Please allow me to set out the view of the United Kingdom on the future role of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of COPUOS.

We strongly believe in the role of COPUOS in ensuring the ongoing sustainability of the space environment and the unique role of this subcommittee, in discussing the scientific and technical aspects of the exploration and use of outer space.

With regards to its role, as stated recently in New York, there is an important distinction between discussions in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the Disarmament Commission on national security activities, and those at COPUOS in Vienna on peaceful uses of outer space. The discussions here in Vienna should focus on safety and sustainability, which may support the security agenda. While discussions in Geneva focus on security which may support of the safety and sustainability agenda. The fact that many space systems are dual-use shows why it is important to have distinct yet complimentary discussions in Geneva and Vienna.

The United Kingdom would now like to share some observations on the ways of working.

Our first point is around accessibility and engagement with non-state actors. It is fantastic that we have a diverse range of observers here and at COPUOS. However, we could and should do more to fully engage the Private Sector and the scientific community.. We believe that we would all

benefit from bringing the latest research, practical experience and scientific practice and sharing it with this Committee. Be this through more presentations or additional panel discussions.

Second, The UK believes that our discussions would benefit from being rationalised into a more coherent order. It would make sense to discuss the agenda items in order, without jumping between agenda items. This would allow for a more informal exchange of ideas, and be more comprehensible to our observers. We believe that sharing experience, ideas and creating a common vision, is one of the defining benefits of the multilateral system. COPUOS and its subcommittees provide excellent platforms for these discussions to happen. We would like to see a greater degree of informality and free flowing exchanges amongst experts. I believe that such an approach would help us to focus on what unites us, and where we can find common ground as we look to the future.

Third, this 60th session has once again seen a diverse range of updates from member states and permanent observers, providing a range of unique insights from how space is being used to study climate change to new science missions to explore our solar system. However, with an increasing number of statements we have seen challenges to fit all of these into our schedule of work. This challenge is compounded by statements that exceed the requirement from the Chair and Secretariat to limit our statements to 5 minutes. The impact of this has been that agenda slots continue to move within the indicative schedule and the time available for formal meetings of the working group is compressed. The impact makes it increasingly hard to coordinate our experts to deliver statements while the latter may mean that the important work of the working groups is less accessible as there is less opportunity for Working Groups to update their key outcomes or agree key items with the benefit of translation services.

The UK sees the benefit of aspects of the hybrid approach in terms of opening up our important work particularly through the available webcast. However, the hybrid nature of the meeting has meant that our plenary sessions are limited in the time available to 2 hours which is one of the key drivers for the challenges faced with scheduling the statements and formal working group meetings previously highlighted. The UK hopes with a return to a larger amount of in-person activity the increased time available will alleviate the issues encountered on timing. We encourage the Chair and UNOOSA to engage with stakeholders to try to identify ways of alleviating or mitigating the issues we have raised

Mr Chair. Our work is only just beginning. We hope that our future work is rooted in practical, open, informal and expert discussion. That we ruthlessly focus on the mandate of COPUOS and that we seek to hear from every actor making a contribution to our collective endeavours.

Thank you Mr Chair and to all of the participants at this session.