

**Statement by Kevin Conole, United States Representative, on**

**Agenda Item 13, “Future role and method of work of the Committee,” February 13, 2023**

Chair, on November 17, 2022, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy released the first National Cislunar Science and Technology (S&T) Strategy to address how the United States will support responsible, peaceful, and sustainable exploration and use of Cislunar space. This Strategy notes that the Moon itself and the regions of Cislunar space in the Earth-Moon system beyond geosynchronous orbit are still largely unexplored.

As the United States prepares to resume human lunar exploration, it is committed to demonstrating how cislunar activities can be carried out for the benefit of and in the interests of all nations, including developing countries, while enhancing transparency and building confidence and cooperation among Moon-faring entities.

As one element of this commitment, the Cislunar S&T Strategy calls for expanded international S&T cooperation to foster peace, develop responsible practices, and create the foundations for new institutions to enable enduring human and robotic presence in Cislunar space. To help achieve this objective, the United States proposes to establish an International Lunar Year. This ILY can build upon the historical examples of past International Polar Years, the International Geophysical Year, and the International Space Year.

Chair, an International Lunar Year later in this decade can demonstrate how lunar activities can be carried out responsibly for the benefit and in the interests of all nations, including developing countries, while enhancing transparency and building confidence and cooperation among Moon-faring entities.

An International Lunar Year also can embody and exemplify the Artemis Accords’ principles through concrete cooperative activities based upon open sharing of scientific data with the public and the international scientific community.

Building upon the precedent of the International Space Year in 1992, the United States believes an ILY initiative should receive endorsement from the UN General Assembly based upon the recommendation of COPUOS.

My delegation therefore welcomes opportunities this year for consultations with other delegations to COPUOS and its subcommittees on the U.S. Cislunar S&T Strategy as well as opportunities to advancing an ILY initiative at a future session of COPUOS.

Chair, in closing the United States would like to reaffirm what we said last week during the Working Group of the Whole. We urge COPUOS and its subcommittees to return to in person only participation with live web streaming as an option for those who are unable to attend. This was the model that was used for more than 60 years and has helped enable the exploration and uses of space for peaceful purposes by an increasingly diverse range of actors, serving a growing set of vital needs on Earth. We heard from the UNOOSA Acting Director earlier this week about the significant cost, which will severely limit their capacity building efforts. Chair, capacity building is integral to the effectiveness of work here. Thank you, Chair.