

United Kingdom, Item 5

UK Statement on space debris at the 62nd session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of COPUOS, 3rd February – 14th February 2025

Chair, Distinguished Delegates.

The Delegation of the United Kingdom is pleased to have the opportunity to share with you the progress and developments on the topic of space debris that we have made since the last meeting of this sub-committee.

In May 2024 the United Kingdom launched its National Space Operations Centre (NSpOC). Led by the UK Space Agency and Space Command in partnership with the Met Office, NSpOC combines civil and military space domain awareness capabilities to monitor and protect against space-related threats, risks and hazards to ensure space remains safe, secure and sustainable. NSpOC provides UK Government, operators and international partners a range of services including: uncontrolled re-entry early warning, fragmentation monitoring and in-space collision avoidance protection. The United Kingdom would like to thank UNOOSA for its efforts in socialising the challenge of Space Traffic Coordination ahead of this session at the Space Sustainability Days and at the United Nations Space Bridge (USB) Dialogue on Global Space Traffic Management in October last year. Space Traffic Coordination is an important issue and the United Kingdom looks forward to continuing to support discussions on data sharing and understanding the approaches to safety taken by regional safety service providers.

The United Kingdom continues to be a strong advocate for the important work performed by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC). The widespread adoption of the IADC space debris

mitigation guidelines and the IADC recommendations for large constellations of satellites continue to remain the most effective method to reduce the long-term environmental impacts of global space activity by slowing the rate of growth of the space debris population. The United Kingdom is pleased to see the release of the updated version of these guidelines at this session under conference room paper A/AC.105/C.1/2025/CRP.9. The recent release of the guidelines include important updates on approaches to post-mission disposal, trackability and constellations. The United Kingdom also welcomes the third annual IADC report on the Status of the Space Debris Environment released at this session as the conference room paper A/AC.105/C.1/2025/CRP.10. The report serves as a critical insight into the global compliance to the space debris mitigation guidelines and the forecasted environmental challenges we may begin to face on-orbit.

Alongside prevention and mitigation, remediation of space debris represents an important tool to reduce the risk of collision on orbit. Following the successful completion of two active debris removal (ADR) Phase B mission studies – Astroscale ‘COSMIC’ and ClearSpace ‘CLEAR’ – further work has been on-going understand the risks and costs associated with a potential future mission. The missions have been designed to demonstrate the national capability to rendezvous, dock with and deorbit two UK-licensed pieces of unprepared space debris. The proposed national ADR mission fits as part of the UK Space Agency’s broader portfolio of work within In-Orbit Servicing, Assembly & Manufacturing (ISAM) which also supports the development of the enabling technologies and test facilities. In May 2024 the UK Space Agency partnered with the Satellite Applications Catapult to co-host the first UK ISAM Conference. The event brought together developers, operators, agencies and regulators, and we recently announced the second ISAM Conference to be held in Belfast on 4-6 June 2025. We look forward to welcoming international participants to the event later this year.

Thank you Chair and Distinguished delegates.