Agenda Item 5 - USA "Space Debris" February 5, 2025

Thank you, Chair. The United States would like to once again emphasize the importance of mitigating risks from orbital debris for the safe operations of current and future space missions. The year 2024 set another record of human space activities with 257 launches worldwide and the deployment of close to 2500 satellites. As we continue to expand the exploration of space, the global community, including space-faring nations, emerging space nations, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, needs to follow the UNCOPUOS Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, the mitigation guidelines developed by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC), and other commonly adopted best practices, to limit the generation of new orbital debris and better preserve the near-Earth space environment.

The United States, through its Department of Defense, provides the U.S. space catalog which contains both active satellites and trackable debris, as well as collision warning information, which has been made public to all space users at no cost for more than a decade. The Department of Commerce seeks to enhance United States space object cataloging and data sharing efforts as it prepares to assume the civil space traffic coordination functions from the Department of Defense in the future. These efforts to provide both continuous service along with data sharing improvements underscore the U.S. commitment to assisting affected mission operators to avoid collisions with cataloged objects and also avoid the creation of more debris through inadvertent collisions.

In addition, NASA has led measurement, modeling, protection, and mitigation initiatives on orbital debris across the spectrum of large and small debris for more than 40 years. We continue measurement efforts to monitor the ever-changing orbital debris environment and to improve object tracking and conjunction assessment capabilities. The collected data is used for developing and updating modeling tools for mission support, and these tools are used for risk assessments and protection against orbital debris by hundreds of operators, governments, industry, academia, and research groups around the world.

Orbital debris is a key component of sustainability, which is a priority for us. NASA issued its first space sustainability strategy focusing on the near-Earth space environment last year. This strategy establishes NASA's plan to address challenges associated with space activities, orbital debris, and other issues connected to space sustainability.

These examples show the strength of our contributions to better understand and manage risks from orbital debris. The United States is committed to continuing our leadership and efforts to collaborate with the international community to address the orbital debris problem for space sustainability, from the near-Earth space environment to Cislunar space. Thank you, Chair.