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English only

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Report of the Moon Village Association on the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities – Status/Plan

Paper submitted by the Moon Village Association

I. Introduction and Background

1. This report summarizes the definition, status, and planning of the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities (GEGSLA) proposed and hosted by the Moon Village Association (MVA). MVA, being an observer organization of UNCOPUOS, has informed all UNCOPUOS delegations in Vienna, December 2020, about the creation of GEGSLA and invited them to join it.

II. The Global Expert Group for Sustainable Lunar Activities (GEGSLA) Status

2. The work of the GEGSLA builds on the foundations laid by several recent key documents, including the MVA Best Practices, the Hague Building Blocks for the Development of an International Framework on Space Resource Activities, the Vancouver Recommendations on Space Mining, and the United Nations Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, but aims to extend those principles to provide more detailed recommendations and practical guidance.

3. Hence, GEGSLA will provide distinct and new directions for international cooperation to encourage the sustainability of lunar activities. The aim of the Group is to increase coordination mechanisms and individuate the present and future challenges of space lunar missions, especially considering the increased global interest in specific areas like the lunar south pole.

4. The primary goal of GEGSLA meetings is to stimulate informal discussions to prepare documents to be brought to the attention of UNCOPUOS for further discussion and deliberation. The Group started its work with the kick-off meeting on February 25, 2021, creating the basis for increasing global coordination for a new era of sustainable space exploration.

5. To achieve its goals, the Group has the following goals:



(a) Leverage contributions from major stakeholders of the space community, including space agencies, private companies, academia, and international organizations;

(b) Involve the public by promoting outreach efforts regarding the activities of the Group through the involvement of local actors at the global level;

(c) Serve as a platform to exchange information and views within the space community on key issues for the peaceful and sustainable conduct of lunar activities;

(d) Support complementary activities, within UNCOPUOS or other international forums, for the development of an international framework regulating space resource utilization.

6. The Group operates by consensus, and it is composed of members and observers, who act in their individual capacity. They are stakeholders in lunar activities, including representatives from space agencies/government, industry, international organizations, academia, and civil society.

7. The Group has established four sub-groups to facilitate its work and tackle the most pressing issues in the future of lunar exploration, namely: Information Sharing; Safe Operations and Lunar Environmental Protection; Compatibility and Interoperability; and Responsible Governance.

8. The Group is chaired by Dr. Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu (Romania). Its members include 37 experts from the following countries: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Israel, Kenya, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

9. The Group, at the moment, includes about 195 observers from more than 40 countries. There is no limitation on the number of observers, new applications are possible at any time.

10. Space Agencies and Government representatives not yet included can request to join the Group as a member.

11. In 2021, the Group held different activities to promote GEGSLA objective, namely:

- A side event during the 64th COPUOS session on “The Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities – Status/Perspectives”, held on August 27, 2021.
- A public webinar to inform the public on GEGSLA status and activities, held online on September 13, 2021.
- A GNF session during the 72nd International Astronautical Congress (IAC2021), on “Sustainable Lunar Activities – The way-forward”, held in Dubai on October 29, 2021.
- A side event during the APRSAF21 - Annual Meetings on “The Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities: status and perspectives” held online November 29, 2021.

12. The MVA has informed the 59th Session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) (A/AC.105/C.1/2022/CRP.17) and this information has been incorporated in the Subcommittee Draft Report. The MVA has also informed the 61st Session of the Legal Subcommittee (LSC) (A/AC.105/C.2/2022/CRP.15) and this information has been incorporated in the Subcommittee Draft Report.

13. The Group main deliverables are:

(a) A Recommended Framework and Key Elements for Peaceful, and Sustainable Lunar Activities; and

(b) Guidelines for lunar activity implementation and operations addressing information sharing; safe operations and lunar environmental protection; compatibility and interoperability; and responsible governance.

These documents will be submitted to the 66th United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS) in 2023.

14. The first draft of the deliverables will be concluded by April 2022. Afterwards, the Group will begin a consensus phase to consolidate the content of the document.

15. The MVA, together with other permanent observers (For All Moonkind, Open Lunar Foundation, Secure World Foundation, and Space Generation Advisory Council) is pleased to inform delegations of the organization of a side event “Progressing Lunar Policy: a Round Table”, which will take place on Friday June 3rd, at 2 pm CEST.

16. MVA invites Delegations to initiate a conversation on lunar coordination to facilitate discussion on the GEGSLA Recommended Framework during the 66th COPUOS session in 2023.

III. Public Consultations

17. Starting from 1 June 2022, GEGSLA will begin an external consultation phase to gather feedback on some of the most controversial points of the Recommended Framework and Key Elements for Peaceful and Sustainable Lunar Activities.

18. The questionnaire with the topics to be analysed can be consulted and completed at the following MVA webpage: <https://moonvillageassociation.org/gegsla/questionnaire/>. For information, the questionnaire is provided as Annex I to this CRP.

19. The consultation will remain open for two months, till 31 July 2022.

20. All Delegations, Members and Permanent Observers are kindly invited to fill in the questionnaire. All inputs received will be taken into account in the finalization of the Recommended Framework document. This consultation will increase the representativity of the final document by having as many stakeholders inputs as possible.

21. This CRP, and related updates, will be presented to raise awareness on the point above, to the 65th session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in June 2022.

Annex I

GEGSLA Critical issues for public consultation

1. At what point should information sharing be carried out in lunar activities?
 - (a) Throughout the planning, operation and decommissioning of an activity
 - (b) Only when there is technology or results that are non-proprietary
 - (c) At the end of an activity
 - (d) At the discretion of the operator
2. An Environmental Impact framework should be developed for the Moon
Yes/No.
3. If yes, where should the responsibility for this impact assessment lie?
 - (a) with national licensing authorities
 - (b) with an international body
 - (c) with a private sector body (e.g. a standards or certification entity)
4. Effective lunar governance, including sustainability, predictability, accountability, and fairness, is best achieved by
 - (a) Each nation devising its own framework
 - (b) Individual agreements between different stakeholders
 - (c) A multilaterally-agreed framework
5. Rank the following benefits from lunar activity in order of importance from 1 to 6:
 - Scientific knowledge
 - Technological products
 - Products (whether technology or systems) that can help solve critical issues on Earth (e.g., adapting to climate change, poverty, water scarcity)
 - Providing a stepping stone to the exploration of the rest of solar system
 - Building capacity in developing or non-spacefaring nations
 - Other - please identify
6. It is likely that the unique conditions of operating in the lunar environment will lead to disputes which will test the limits of existing outer space law. The risks from disputes can be best managed by
 - (a) Recourse to existing national and international law
 - (b) States requiring dispute settlement provisions in licenses or permits to operate on the Moon
 - (c) A 'claims commission' established specifically to deal with lunar disputes (as per the Liability Convention 1972)
 - (d) All of the above