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## Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

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Item 13 of the provisional agenda\*

**Long-term sustainability of outer space activities**

### **Draft terms of reference, methods of work and workplan of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities**

#### **Working paper by the Chair of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities**

At its sixty-fourth session, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space noted that the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities had agreed that it would hold online informal consultations from 22 to 24 November 2021 to advance discussions on its terms of reference, methods of work and workplan (A/76/20, para. 123). The Chair, with the support of the Secretariat, was requested to have the document resulting from the online informal consultations in November 2021 translated into all the official languages of the United Nations (A/76/20, para. 125). The present working paper reflects progress made during the online informal consultations held in November 2021, as well as subsequent efforts by the Chair to reduce alternative text options to facilitate further discussions.

#### **Terms of reference, methods of work and workplan of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities**

##### **I. Introduction**

1. At its sixty-second session, in 2019, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space adopted the preamble and 21 guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities (A/74/20, annex II). The Committee encouraged States and international intergovernmental organizations to voluntarily take measures for the implementation of the guidelines to the greatest extent feasible and practicable (A/74/20, para. 163) [, in accordance with their respective needs, conditions and capabilities (A/74/20, annex II, para. 16)].

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\* A/AC.105/C.1/L.392.



2. The Committee noted that it should serve as the principal forum for continued institutionalized dialogue on issues related to the implementation and review of the guidelines ([A/74/20](#), para. 164).
3. At the same session, the Committee decided to establish, under a five-year workplan, a working group under the agenda item on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee ([A/74/20](#), para. 165).
4. The Committee also decided that the working group would agree on its own terms of reference, methods of work and dedicated workplan, and that the working group would be guided by the following framework:
  - (a) Identifying and studying challenges and considering possible new guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. This could be done by taking into consideration existing documents including, inter alia, documents [A/AC.105/C.1/L.367](#) and A/AC.105/2019/CRP.16;
  - (b) Sharing experiences, practices and lessons learned from voluntary [and not legally binding ([A/74/20](#), annex II, para. 15)] national implementation of the adopted guidelines;
  - (c) Raising awareness and building capacity [and transferring technology], in particular among emerging space nations and developing countries ([A/74/20](#), para. 167).
5. At its fifty-eighth session, in 2021, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee elected Umamaheswaran R. (India) as Chair of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities and convened the Working Group ([A/AC.105/1240](#), para. 195).

## II. Terms of reference

6. The Working Group will be guided by the framework defined in the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on its sixty-second session ([A/74/20](#), para. 167), which comprises the following:
  - (a) Identifying and studying challenges and considering possible new guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. This could be done by taking into consideration existing documents including, inter alia, documents [A/AC.105/C.1/L.367](#) and A/AC.105/2019/CRP.16;
  - (b) Sharing experiences, practices and lessons learned from voluntary national implementation of the adopted guidelines;
  - (c) Raising awareness and building capacity, in particular among emerging space nations and developing countries.
7. The Working Group will attach equal importance to each of the three elements of the guiding framework set out in the paragraph above.
8. [The Working Group will adopt as its legal framework the existing United Nations treaties and principles governing the activities of States in the exploration and use of outer space.]
9. The Working Group will produce a thorough report on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, containing the following:
  - (a) Information on the identification and study of challenges, and corresponding recommendations, as well as possible new guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities;
  - (b) Information on experiences, practices and lessons learned from voluntary implementation of the adopted Guidelines and recommendations for their further practical implementation;

(c) Information on and recommendations for capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, including those related to improving international cooperation in capacity-building, taking into particular consideration the requirements of emerging space nations and developing countries;

(d) Recommendations on future activities and work.

### III. Method of work

10. The Working Group, led by the Chair and assisted by the Secretariat, is to be guided in its work by the rules of procedure, methods of work and established practices of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The Working Group makes decisions by consensus and reports to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. The Working Group will meet during the annual sessions of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, with the benefit of interpretation services, and may request that time be granted to meet during the sessions of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

11. The Working Group may request the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to coordinate with the Legal Subcommittee on legal questions.

12. The Working Group may decide, on an exceptional basis, to meet intersessionally to advance its work. The scheduling of any such meetings will be agreed by the member States in advance at the formal sessions and may include opportunities to participate virtually, if possible, so as to encourage maximum participation.

13. The Working Group will structure its discussions in a sequential, non-simultaneous and balanced manner under the leadership of the Chair, giving equal importance and an equitable amount of time to each of the three elements of the guiding framework.

14. The Working Group will invite contributions from States members of the Committee for further discussion at its meetings.

15. [[The Working Group will] [As the Working Group is intergovernmental in nature, it may decide, in accordance with the established practices of the Committee, to] invite contributions of information from international organizations and non-governmental entities, including from academia, industry and the private sector [, and these will be coordinated through the identified national point of contact] .]

[Contributions and/or input on specific issues relating to the terms of the Working Group may be sought from third parties.]

[It is understood that the input of national non-governmental organizations and private sector entities will be obtained through the relevant States members of the Committee.]

[The negotiations of the Working Group are intergovernmental by nature and any input from States members of the Committee or organizations having permanent observer status with the Committee, as well as non-governmental organizations, industry or the private sector, is to be provided in accordance with the rules of procedure, methods of work and established practices of the Committee.]

[The Working Group will be open to all States members of the Committee. [[The Chair] [The Working Group] will invite contributions of information from international intergovernmental organizations having observer status, international organizations and non-governmental entities, including from academia, industry and the private sector, in accordance with the rules of procedure, methods of work and established practices of the Committee.]]

[The European Union will participate in the work of the Working Group.]

To this end, workshops may be held during sessions and/or intersessional periods.

*[It is proposed that paragraph 16 below be placed before what is currently paragraph 15.]*

16. The Chair of the Working Group, with the support to the Secretariat, will establish and maintain a list of points of contact for each member State and permanent observer to facilitate faster and more effective dissemination of information, in addition to continuing to use formal means of communication.

17. The formal documents of the Working Group will be made available in all of the official languages of the United Nations.

#### **IV. Multi-year workplan**

The five-year workplan of the Working Group for the period 2022–2026 is as follows:

##### **2022**

Adoption of the terms of reference, methods of work and dedicated workplan for the Working Group.

Continue to identify points of contact for each member State [and identify points of contact for permanent observers].

[Invite] States members of the Committee and [international intergovernmental and non-governmental] organizations having permanent observer status with the Committee [, subject to the relevant provisions of paragraphs 14 and 15 above,] to provide information and views on the following:

*[Alternative formulations for the items on which information and views are to be provided are given below.]*

*[Alternative 1]*

(a) Challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, and topics to be addressed by the Working Group with a view to developing corresponding recommendations and possible new guidelines;

(b) Practical implementation of the 21 adopted Guidelines at the national and international levels;

(c) Awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts.]

*[Alternative 2]*

[Challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, and recommendations for possible new guidelines; experiences, practices and lessons learned from the practical implementation of the adopted Guidelines at the national and international levels; and awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, in particular among emerging space nations and developing countries.]

[To support this, a questionnaire is to be circulated, through the Secretariat, requesting information [and views], to be provided on a voluntarily basis, [on implementation experiences, including challenges and lessons learned, and current and future initiatives to foster implementation of the Guidelines.] [on the topics set out in subparagraphs (a), (b) and (c) above.]] [To support this, a template is to be circulated to collect information from member States and observer organizations on implementation of the Guidelines, related challenges and possible new guidelines, and related capacity-building efforts. Document A/AC.105/C.1/2021/CRP.16 may inform the development and use of the template.]

##### **2023**

Information and views to continue to be submitted, as in 2022.

[The Chair and the Secretariat to compile information received and the Working Group to start consultations and exchanges thereon.]

[[Consultations] [Exchange of views] to take place on a possible international cooperation mechanism for capacity-building.]

[An agenda to be developed for the workshop to be held in 2024.]

## 2024

[A workshop is to be held, within existing resources, on the margins of the sixty-first session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to gather information [on: (a) the practical implementation of the 21 adopted Guidelines; (b) the challenges being faced; and (c) [awareness-raising and] capacity-building efforts] [on: (a) challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities; (b) the practical implementation of the 21 adopted Guidelines; and (c) capacity-building efforts.] [in order to identify international cooperation opportunities and the gaps between developing countries and developed countries with regard to capacity-building for peaceful space activities, with a view to empowering developing countries to implement voluntary guidelines.]]

[More than one workshop is to be organized under the multi-year workplan; the workshops could focus on thematic areas such as space debris removal technologies, space debris monitoring technologies and conjunction assessment, or space communication protocols.]

[Continued discussion [and analysis] to be carried out on the implementation of adopted Guidelines, the identification of challenges and possible new [and/or updated] guidelines, and capacity-building [discussions] [efforts] [undertaken].

[[Possible agreement] [Agreement] on an international cooperation mechanism for capacity-building.]

[A preliminary [compilation] [report] of findings will be produced [both on (a) best practices pertaining to the implementation of the guidelines on national policy and regulatory frameworks for space activities, and analysis of the challenges, and potential new guidelines for consideration; and (b) best practices pertaining to the implementation of the guidelines regarding the safety and sustainability of space operations, including relevant aspects of scientific and technical research and development, and analysis of the challenges, and potential new guidelines for consideration] [that captures initial findings on implementation, challenges faced and related possible new guidelines, and capacity-building].]

[For the sixty-first session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Chair to present a draft compilation of the information and views received. Pursue consultations and exchanges thereon with a view to: (a) agreeing on challenges related to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and developing possible new guidelines and further recommendations; (b) agreeing on recommendations related to the implementation of the 21 adopted Guidelines at the national and international levels; and (c) agreeing on recommendations related to enhanced awareness-raising and capacity-building.]

## 2025

[The Chair to [develop][refine] a draft report for consideration by the Working Group at the sixty-second session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. [The Working Group will review and discuss findings contained in the preliminary draft report and consolidate any additional information and views provided, and the Chair will refine the findings on implementation using additional information and views provided.] A revised version of the draft report will be prepared for consideration at the sixty-eighth session of the Committee.]

[The Chair to develop a draft report for consideration by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its sixty-second session containing: (a) a compilation of the

information and views received; (b) a list of agreed challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities; (c) draft recommendations related to the implementation at the national and international levels of the 21 agreed Guidelines and to awareness-raising and capacity-building. Hold consultations on new draft guidelines and further recommendations relating to the challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and continue consultations on draft recommendations referred to in (c) above.]

## **2026**

A final report of the Working Group to be presented to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its sixty-third session, to include the following:

- (a) Information on the identification and study of challenges, and corresponding recommendations, as well as possible new guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities;
  - (b) Information on experiences, practices and lessons learned from voluntary implementation of the adopted Guidelines and recommendations for their further practical implementation;
  - (c) Information on and recommendations for capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, including those related to improving international cooperation in capacity-building, taking into particular consideration the requirements of emerging space nations and developing countries;
  - (d) Recommendations on future activities and work.
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