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English only

**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space**
Legal Subcommittee
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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, 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 38 experts from the following countries: Austria, Australia, 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, 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 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. A public consultation phase on the main critical issues is expected to take place by mid-2022.

III. Plan

16. GEGSLA welcomes the creation of the Working Group on Space Resources, at the 60th session of the Legal Subcommittee, under the agenda item entitled “General exchange of views on potential legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources” as indicated in A/AC.105/1243 para 255 and will actively engage with this Working Group to inform it about relevant work of the GEGSLA and achieve synergy.

17. Nonetheless, Lunar Governance is a more comprehensive issue related to problems that will arise in the coming years of Lunar exploration, e.g., information sharing, safety zones, environmental, interoperability, sustainability, and heritage protection. ten missions in the lunar and cislunar space are planned for 2022 alone, carried out by several States through governmental and private institutions. And with these, many new issues will arise and require guidance at the United Nations level, as there grows an urgent need to define a common level playing field to avoid creating international uncertainty and increase peaceful global cooperation. Accordingly, given the scope of Lunar Governance matters, broader than the exploitation and utilization of lunar resources, MVA suggests creating an ad-hoc agenda item for the UNCOPUOS to discuss those critical and urgent issues. GEGSLA deliverables, which specifically deal with Sustainable Lunar Activities, could provide excellent input to initiate further dialogue and development on those topics.

18. Similarly, existing UNCOPUOS agenda items related to space exploration could be too broad to address specific lunar sustainable exploration and governance issues.

19. MVA invites Member States to begin and support the discussion on the inclusion of Lunar Governance issues for Sustainable Lunar Activities. Examples are information sharing, safety zones, debris mitigations and others, as a new yearly agenda item, at the 66th COPUOS session in 2023. MVA considers COPUOS as the best place for the discussions given the interlinked complex technical and legal considerations.

20. 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.