

**Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Legal Subcommittee 63rd session (15-26 April 2024)**

Agenda Item 5: “Information on the activities of international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations relating to space law”

**Observer: Committee on Space Research (COSPAR)
Statement by Mr. Niklas HEDMAN, COSPAR General Counsel**

Mr. Chair,

At the outset I wish to congratulate you upon your election as Chair of the Legal Subcommittee and to express my appreciation to the new leadership of UNOOSA. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to address the Legal Subcommittee on behalf of the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR).

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

COSPAR has a longstanding partnership with the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), becoming its first permanent observer in 1962. Founded in 1958, COSPAR stands as the foremost global entity promoting international collaboration in space research. Through its Scientific Assemblies, commissions, panels, roadmaps, and publications, COSPAR actively fosters sustainable exploration and use of outer space. The upcoming 45th COSPAR Scientific Assembly will be held in Busan, Republic of Korea, 13-21 July 2024.

COSPAR places great emphasis on capacity-building and education, striving to support space research within countries developing their space programs. The Committee’s efforts particularly aim to empower the next generation of space scientists. Furthermore, COSPAR has formed a Committee on Industry Relations, which now includes eighteen space companies, to foster dialogue between the scientific community and the space industry.

COSPAR is cooperating with the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities (GEGSLA) and will strongly support the Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultation (ATLAC).

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

For many decades, the COSPAR Panel on Planetary Protection (PPP), and its predecessors, have upheld the principles of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, advising on the avoidance of organic-constituent and biological contamination introduced by planetary missions. The membership of the Panel on Planetary Protection comprises representatives of national space agencies and independent scientific expertise. This is the only international mechanism set up in response to the call in OST Article IX for appropriate measures against harmful contamination

and adverse changes in the environment of the Earth resulting from the introduction of extraterrestrial matter.

The Panel maintains the COSPAR Policy on Planetary Protection, a voluntary non-legally binding standard for the reference of spacefaring nations to guide compliance with the Outer Space Treaty.

This March 2024 the COSPAR Bureau approved a new modernized version of the Policy developed by the Panel. The new Policy is extensively restructured and edited to enhance coherence, consistency, and better understanding of its target body categorization and corresponding guidelines for the benefit of entities conducting activities in outer space. No substantive changes have been made to the categorization and guidelines. The new Policy will shortly be published and uploaded to the COSPAR website.

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

In conclusion, COSPAR through the work of its commissions and panels, including the Panel on Exploration (PEX) and Panel on Potentially Environmentally Detrimental Activities in Space (PEDAS), emphasizes the importance of sustainable environmental stewardship in activities in outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies. For example, PEX provides scientific advice to support the development of exploration programs and to safeguard present and potential scientific assets of solar system bodies, and to understand the consequences of proposed and ongoing research, exploration, and utilization activities. PEDAS provides scientific research and expertise on the growing problem of space debris and potentially detrimental activities to the peaceful uses of outer space.

As COSPAR emphasized in the recent 61st session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, there is an urgent need for guidelines and regulatory frameworks in the cislunar region, such as encompassing collision avoidance and the passivation of upper stages. As a first step, the cislunar region should be recommended to be a protected region. This is required to harmonize economic interests with the imperative to safeguard the scientific integrity of space exploration.

Thank you for your attention.