



63rd session of the Legal Subcommittee

15 – 26 April 2024

Statement by Australia

Agenda Item: 9 – General exchange of views on potential legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilisation of space resources

Thank you Chair, distinguished delegates.

The United Nations Space Treaties provide the framework for ensuring the peaceful and safe use of outer space, including on the Moon and other celestial bodies.

Australia is a founding Member of the Committee, and State Party to the five UN Space Treaties, including the Moon Agreement. Australia's view is that the Moon Agreement provides a framework specific to the exploration, exploitation and use of the Moon and its natural resources. It can also be useful in helping to identify and develop principles for activities in the exploration, exploitation, and utilisation of space resources.

In 2020, Australia became a founding signatory to the Artemis Accords, which establish a practical set of principles to guide space exploration. The Artemis Accords aim to increase the safety of operations, reduce uncertainty, and

promote the sustainable and beneficial use of space. The Signatories intend to use their experience under the Accords to contribute to multilateral efforts to further develop international practices and rules applicable to the extraction and utilisation of space resources. This includes through ongoing efforts at this Subcommittee.

Australia considers that the Artemis Accords are consistent with Australia's international obligations. Australia considers that the Moon Agreement and the Artemis Accords provide frameworks that will *guide* and *enable* Australia's planned future activities on the Moon.

Development of a set of initial recommended principles for the exploration, exploitation and utilisation of space resources

Chair,

Australia is committed to the development and implementation of rules and norms that seek to support the safety, stability and sustainability of outer space.

At the 62nd session of the Subcommittee, Australia was pleased to join Austria and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in co-sponsoring a Conference Room Paper (CRP) that provides relevant considerations for developing a set of initial recommended principles for the exploration, exploitation and utilisation of space resources (A/AC.105/C.2/2023/CRP.6). The CRP identifies key themes

addressed in the Outer Space Treaty, the Moon Agreement, the Hague Building Blocks and the Artemis Accords.

This year, Australia is pleased to submit a CRP entitled '*Consideration of general themes and obligations, commitments or guidelines to an activity contributing to exploration and scientific investigation of the Moon*' (A/AC.105/C.2/2024/CRP.24). This present paper outlines some general themes and obligations, commitments or guidelines of the existing framework, that may apply to an Australian activity contributing to exploration and scientific investigation of the Moon.

The activity is to be conducted as part of the Trailblazer program under the Australian Government's Moon to Mars Initiative. It includes the development, launch and operation of a foundation services rover, capable of collecting lunar regolith and delivering it to an in-situ resource utilisation facility or equivalent representative systems on the Moon.

The CRP is intended to support considerations of the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities (the Working Group) regarding the development of a set of initial recommended principles for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilisation of space resources.

Australia continues to extend its full support to the Chair of the Working Group, Mr Andrzej Misztal, and Vice-Chair, Professor Steven Freeland.

Australia has also been engaging with our domestic space sector to seek their views on activities in the scientific investigation, exploration and use of space resources. On 28 February 2024, the Australian Space Agency hosted a Space Regulation Advisory Collective (SRAC) forum on space resources, which was attended by 42 representatives from industry, academia and other non-government entities.

The forum provided an opportunity to seek views on issues, including the scope of future activities, environmental and socio-economic considerations, and international cooperation in scientific research and technological development; topics which were considered in the Expert Meeting. Input gathered will help to inform Australia's consideration of these issues.

Conclusion

Chair,

We look forward to working with Member States on the development of a set of initial recommended principles for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilisation of space resources.

Thank you.