

## **Statement by U.S. Delegation**

### **UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, 57th Session**

#### **Agenda Item 13: “Long-term sustainability of outer space activities”**

**Vienna Austria, February X, 2020**

Madame Chair,

The increasing utilization of space -- including a significant increase in the volume and diversity of commercial activity -- means actors need to take responsibility for maintaining outer space as a stable, safe and sustainable environment. It is in the interest of all nations to ensure a stable and orderly space environment that drives opportunity, creates prosperity, and ensures our security on Earth and in the vast expanse of space.

In this regard, the United States is pleased that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space adopted the Preamble and 21 Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities (LTS), as they represent best practices for the safe and responsible use of space. These 21 voluntary LTS guidelines mark an important milestone in ensuring that all nations can continue to benefit from the use of space over the long-term.

The United States is currently conducting a comprehensive inventory of Government and private sector implementation of the 21 agreed guidelines. We look forward to sharing the results of this inventory at future Subcommittee and full Committee meetings. The United States urges other nations to take a similar, focused look at how they intend to implement the guidelines at the national level.

Madame Chair,

As my delegation has noted before, the work of the U.S. National Space Council chaired by Vice President Pence and the resulting space policy directives signed by President Trump have brought together all elements of American leadership in space. As part of these efforts, the United States is moving ahead with implementation of the President’s Space Policy Directives related to space exploration and streamlining regulation of space activities. This whole-

of government approach to U.S. leadership in space highlights our commitment to space sustainability, effective space operations, and responsible behavior in space.

Regarding our efforts to enhance sustainability of space activities, the U.S. delegation would like to continue work in implementing the President's Space Policy Directive-3 (SPD-3) on "National Space Traffic Management Policy." It is particularly worth noting that SPD-3 states that "the United States should encourage the adoption of new norms of behavior and best practices for space operations by the international community through bilateral and multilateral discussions with other spacefaring nations, and through U.S. participation in various organizations," including COPUOS and other international bilateral and multilateral engagements.

Madame Chair,

The United States believes that COPUOS, and this Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, should remain key multilateral fora for fostering conducive environments which strengthen the safety, stability, and sustainability of our space activities. We also believe that COPUOS should serve as the principal forum for continued institutionalized dialogue on issues related to the implementation and review of the 21 adopted guidelines. We want to note that it is important to recognize that simply because the guidelines have been adopted, the work associated with the guidelines is not complete. Just like the debris guidelines, this committee has negotiated the guidelines, it has adopted the guidelines, and now each State can apply the guidelines, and bring their observations to the table to inform future LTS efforts.

In this regard, the United States is pleased to join with Canada and Japan in sponsoring a proposal for a new STSC working group on LTS (A/AC.105/C.1/2020/CRP.XXX). As technology advances and resulting capabilities for the peaceful use of space progress, our delegations believe that the practical implementation of the 21 adopted LTS guidelines will result in new "best practices," and the challenges discovered through implementation will raise new issues regarding safe and sustainable space operations. Therefore, we propose that advancing implementation of the 21 adopted LTS guidelines serve as the primary initial focus for the new "LTS 2.0 Working Group" and two subsidiary expert groups.

Specifically, the expert groups could address implementation of the 21 adopted guidelines in two categories:

- (a) Expert group A: National policy and frameworks for space activities, including relevant aspects of international cooperation, raising awareness and building capacity, in particular among emerging space nations and developing countries, and
- (b) Expert group B: Safety of space operations, including relevant aspects of scientific and technical research and development.

As the group progresses through its five year workplan, both expert groups could identify and study challenges and consider possible new guidelines for the longterm sustainability of outer space activities, taking full account of preceding consensus recommendations on advancing implementation of the 21 adopted LTS guidelines.

These exchanges can build upon informal discussions such as the very informative panel event on ““Opportunities and Challenges for International Cooperation in the Implementation of the LTS Guidelines”” convened by [Co-sponsors], and the Secure World Foundation held on the margins of this STSC session.

Madame Chair, as a result of the Space Policy Directive-3 on “National Space Traffic Management Policy” and U.S. commitment to the LTS guidelines, my delegation [has used][is using] this session of STSC to highlight aspects of the practical implementation of the 21 agreed LTS guidelines in a series of U.S. technical presentations. These presentations [reviewed][will note] progress in the development of standards for on-orbit servicing and rendezvous and proximity operations, and private sector efforts to develop and maintain a set of "living" best practices for spaceflight safety. These presentations illustrate the continued U.S. commitment to take a leadership role in COPUOS on LTS and spaceflight safety as well as related, "bottom up," technically-based transparency and confidencebuilding measures which create the conditions for a safe, stable, and operationally sustainable space environment.

As the only standing body of the United Nations concerned exclusively with the peaceful uses of outer space, COPUOS has been extremely successful in fostering international cooperation towards this end. Indeed, for six decades, this Committee has focused on building consensus to advance the peaceful exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all humanity. And given the scientific and commercial imperatives, we have no doubt that this Subcommittee will continue to make significant progress in promoting international space cooperation. We look forward to continuing to work through this unique, cooperative forum to promote space exploration and to reap the scientific benefits from such exploration to improve the quality of life for all here on Earth.

Thank you for your attention.