

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS): UK statement at the 61st Legal Sub-committee

Chair, Distinguished Delegates

Space has a way of bringing us all together around a common goal and we're proud of our collective achievements through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in the advancement of the peaceful use and exploration of outer space.

The United Kingdom appreciates that whilst we are here to talk about the peaceful uses of space, we cannot and should not ignore violations of international law when they occur on Earth.

Russia's assault on Ukraine is an unprovoked, premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state. The UK and our international partners stand united in condemning the Russian government's reprehensible actions, which are an egregious violation of international law including the UN Charter.

We call on Russia to urgently de-escalate and withdraw its troops. It must be held accountable and stop undermining democracy, global stability, and international law.

The UK also expresses our serious concern at the proposed establishment of a new regional centre for space science and technology education in the Russian Federation, which was referred to in UN General Assembly resolution 76/76 and which is supposedly meant to build partnerships across the Eurasian region.

Russia's actions in recent weeks have demonstrated that it is not 'peaceful' and that it no longer holds the respect or endorsement of its Eurasian partners. We cannot ignore Russia's aggression against Ukraine. These troublesome times show that it is not business as usual, and in this regard, we reiterate our serious concern at the proposed new regional centre.

Chair,

It is within this context, that I would like to provide an update to COPUOS on the progress taken by the UK to implement and operationalise our domestic regulations and strategies since the last Legal Sub-Committee.

In September 2021 the UK released its [National Space Strategy](#). This first ever National Space Strategy brings together the UK's strengths in science and technology, defence, regulation and diplomacy to pursue a bold national vision.

The Strategy highlights the UK's commitment to work with industry and internationally to ensure we have the safest and most effective regulation of space activities. We will continually improve safety standards, implement

relevant consents, and mitigate the negative environmental impacts of our space activities.

The [UK's Space Industry Act](#) was enacted in 2018 and created an enabling framework for regulating space launch from the United Kingdom. In July 2021, the UK Space Industry Regulations which underpin the Space Industry Act were signed into law, enabling both horizontal and vertical launch from the UK.

These regulations also enabled the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to take on the role of the UK's independent Spaceflight Regulator. The CAA will be providing a technical presentation tomorrow, 29 March in the morning session, on the approach to the regulation of UK activities, which you are all invited to.

Furthermore, our national legislation provides us with a mechanism to implement the commitments set out in the 21 agreed Long Term Sustainability (LTS) of space guidelines. The UK is playing a leading role in supporting an inclusive approach to capacity building and implementation of the LTS guidelines. The UK was pleased to fund our first project with UNOOSA which included publishing the LTS guidelines in all 6 official UN languages, convening international expert events and interviews with Member States on implementing the guidelines.

The UK also became the first country to annually submit a conference room paper setting out our national implementation of the guidelines.

The UK has significant experience in developing a new regulatory framework, and we are very happy to discuss our experiences with Member States considering doing the same.

As well as UK launch, the UK National Space Strategy highlights the commitment to position the UK at the forefront of modern regulation for novel space activities whilst keeping space sustainable, safe and secure.

This includes advancing UK missions involving in-orbit debris removal, servicing, refuelling and assembly technologies – what we refer to under the umbrella term of proximity missions. We aim to bring together industry, academia, and government to ensure the UK is ready to grasp the opportunities of the future space economy. The UK sees the importance of these activities to contribute to the sustainability of space, utilising technology to extend the life of satellites in orbit and by removing hazardous debris. For such missions to be successful, close international collaboration is vital as well as transparency about activities within the international community.

It is our view that a cohesive international approach to the registration of space objects will provide a key foundation for developing international approaches to proximity missions as well as constellations and the utilisation of space resources.

The future use of space resources impacts us all. It will help us unlock deep space exploration, ensure the sustainability of human life on celestial bodies and will allow us to unlock new tools and technologies that were only

previously considered stuff of fiction.

By signing the Artemis Accords, the UK is joining international partners to agree a common set of principles which will guide space exploration for years to come. The Artemis Accords will ensure a shared understanding of safe operations, use of space resources, minimising space debris and sharing scientific data.

We welcome the formation of a working group on space resources and look forward to beginning our work in this area. We wish to thank the Chair Andrzej Misztal and the Vice Chair Steven Freeland, for all their hard work on the terms of reference and work plan for the group. We will provide a further statement under the dedicated agenda item.

Chair, we look forward to a productive legal sub-committee. Thank you.