

**Statement by Ambassador Laura S.H. Holgate, Co-Head of Delegation for the
United States
66th Session of UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on Agenda
Item 4, “General Exchange of Views”
June 2, 2023**

Thank you, Chair. On behalf of my government, I wish to express our continued appreciation for your and the Secretariat’s efforts in moving the work of this Committee forward at such an important moment in the space age. The United States strongly believes in the mission of this Committee and is dedicated to promoting the beneficial use of outer space for all humankind.

We also understand the need to constantly examine, assess, and improve our own national processes and priorities for outer space activities. This year alone, the United States released the “National Preparedness Strategy and Action Plan for Near-Earth Object Hazards and Planetary Defense,” the “National Cislunar Science and Technology Strategy,” the “The National Low Earth Orbit Research and Development Strategy,” and — just this week — the Department of State’s Strategic Framework for Space Diplomacy. Each of these documents specifically highlight the importance of this Committee and demonstrate the U.S. commitment to operate responsibly, safely, and cooperatively in outer space. We also recognize and appreciate the continued growth of the commercial space industry, as well as the importance of seeking and understanding their views as we continue to develop and improve our regulatory framework.

Moreover, through UN General Assembly Resolution 77/41, the United States joined with 154 nations to call upon all states to commit not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. To date, thirteen nations have joined the United States to make national commitments of their own. We call upon all UNCOPUOS Members to make this commitment in order to contribute toward keeping outer space peaceful, sustainable, and safe for future generations.

We also join other delegations in condemning the DPRK’s failed launch earlier this week of a claimed space vehicle. This attempted launch was a brazen violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions and risks destabilizing the regional

security situation. Pyongyang must immediately cease its provocative actions and instead choose engagement in serious and sustained diplomacy.

Chair, the United States and our partners have accomplished truly ambitious endeavors in space this past year. Last November, NASA successfully launched its Space Launch System rocket for the first time as part of the Artemis I mission. The Artemis II launch, set for November 2024, will carry the first woman and African American man to orbit the Moon and will be international in scope, as it will also be crewed by a Canadian astronaut.

NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test, or DART, was humanity's first attempt to perceptibly alter the motion of a celestial body. DART was proven successful by measurements using international telescopes across six continents and the Italian CubeSat, LiciaCube, which captured spectacular images of the impact.

From the International Space Station to the Artemis Accords and the Lunar Gateway, we believe that close collaboration and cooperation with international partners is critical to success in space. Since UNCOPUOS last met, we welcomed the Czech Republic, Nigeria, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, and — just this week — Spain as Signatories to the Accords. We look forward to discussing Signatories' work with the Committee, as open and transparent sharing of information is essential to facilitating international cooperation and is a key principle of the Artemis Accords.

As the U.S. government celebrates 2023 as the "Year of Open Science," we reflect on the many ways we have delivered on NASA's commitment to explore the mysteries of the universe "for the benefit of all." The United States makes available its Earth observations freely and openly, enabling all nations to understand our home planet more fully, improve lives, and safeguard our future.

I note with great satisfaction the continued work of the "Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities Working Group" and the "Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities," and I encourage Member States to find common ground on the pressing issue of "Dark and Quiet Skies." We appreciate the release of the UN Secretary General's policy brief on outer space and look forward to the "Summit of the Future," where this Committee should leverage its unique role in advocating for a robust, multi-stakeholder event.

Chair, I regret that even as we affirm in this Committee the importance of international law and global governance of human activities beyond the heavens, one Member State continues to undermine the very foundation of the rules-based international system here on Earth. Not only is Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine a clear violation of international law but, in the course of waging its war, Russian forces have committed war crimes and other atrocities. Commercial satellite imagery has contributed important evidence that will help hold Russia accountable for these acts, a sobering but encouraging reminder of how outer space activities can – and, indeed, must – contribute to a more just and peaceful world.

Thank you, Chair