

**Statement by U.S. Ambassador Laura S.H. Holgate,
on Agenda Item 4, “General Exchange of Views,” January 30, 2024**

Thank you, Chair. The U.S. delegation appreciates your leadership during this 61st session. We also welcome the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, Aarti Holla-Maini, and UNOOSA Senior Advisor Driss El Hadani, to their first COPUOS meeting in their new roles. We are pleased that both bring keenly relevant backgrounds and expertise to UNOOSA’s work in the current era of the space age.

Chair, in 2023, America’s space program once again pushed the limits of exploration for the benefit of humanity. We celebrated NASA astronaut Frank Rubio becoming the first American astronaut to spend more than one year in space; delivered samples from an asteroid to Earth; sent a spacecraft to study a metal-rich asteroid for the first time; launched multiple initiatives to expand our sharing of climate data; and continued preparations to send the first Artemis astronauts to the Moon.

Since the dawn of the space age, the United States has used satellites to foster a better understanding of our home planet, improve lives, and work towards a brighter future for all. It has been heartening to see many other nations as well as a growing commercial space sector work towards these same goals as well. Commercial space activities have made the benefits of outer space more accessible to more people. Last year, more than 71 million people connected to commercial satellite broadband services, helping bridge the digital divide and enabling communities in the most remote regions of the world to access educational resources, telehealth, and other benefits of connectivity.

The United States makes its Earth observation data freely and openly available. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), together with partners in Europe, Japan, Korea, and India, provide access to observations that help decisionmakers better understand and predict environmental threats. NASA’s Earth Information Center provides critical data needed by researchers and policymakers. To that end, NASA, NOAA, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) worked with international partners to showcase the importance of our space-based assets in addressing the climate crisis at the 28th UN Climate Change Conference, hosted by the United Arab Emirates. The U.S. Mission in Vienna and

NASA, with the collaboration of UNOOSA, also organized a global competition to encourage using these freely available data to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. More than 1,500 participants from 100 countries joined the competition and just last week finalized their submissions.

Chair, among the many accomplishments for the U.S. human spaceflight program, NASA and our international partners celebrated 25 years of International Space Station operations. At the same time, NASA continued to foster the growth of the commercial space economy, supporting the development of commercial space station partnerships. Beyond low-Earth orbit, the Artemis Program is taking significant steps toward landing the first woman and first person of color on the Moon. Notably, NASA announced crew for the Artemis II mission, the first Artemis mission with Canadian and American astronauts traveling around the Moon and back to Earth. This increased focus on international cooperation has also underscored the importance of the Artemis Accords. In the past year, Angola, Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Iceland, India, the Netherlands, and Spain signed the Accords, bringing to 34 the number of countries that have embraced this common set of principles for the safe, sustainable, and transparent civil exploration and use of outer space.

The USGS Earth Resources Observation and Science Center celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Center's opening and serves as the anchor for the Landsat Program's data management and mission operations.

The NASA James Webb Space Telescope recently celebrated one year of scientific observation. A joint effort with the European and Canadian space agencies, Webb pulled back the curtain on some of the farthest galaxies, stars, and black holes ever observed; solved a longstanding mystery about the early universe; found methane and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere of a planet outside our solar system; and offered new insights into our own cosmic backyard.

Indeed, advances in outer space continued to reflect the best of human innovation and international cooperation in the past year. But they also provided transparency into some of the most brutal transgressions. Satellite imagery has contributed important evidence that will help hold Russia accountable for their unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine, a sobering but encouraging reminder of how outer space activities can – and, indeed, must – contribute to a

more just and peaceful world. In light of Russia's ongoing aggression, any affiliation between the United Nations and the proposed regional center for space science and technology education in the Russian Federation would be wholly inappropriate.

Chair, the United States looks forward to working constructively with other delegations to advance the essential work of this Committee, including the ongoing efforts in the LTS 2.0 Working Group. We also hope that all delegations can recognize the importance of addressing the potential effects of satellites and large satellite constellations on astronomy, and that we can agree to a properly scoped Dark and Quiet Skies agenda item and expert group. These issues, and many more, further underscore that as the number and diversity of space actors and activities continues to accelerate, the work of this Committee is more important than ever. Thank you, Chair.