

Thank you, Chair. First, let me express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretariat and to you, Chair, for organizing this productive session. This session is our first with a streamlined agenda, which the United States views as an excellent example of collaboration between Member States to improve the efficiency of our work. My delegation has found the sequential order of agenda item topics a welcome change, as it has fostered both predictability and a steady pace of discussion.

The United States also thanks Romania for their submission of a "Proposal on a Consultative Mechanism on Lunar Activities." We look forward to reviewing this submission closely and engaging in discussions with Member States on a possible way forward.

We also welcome the conference room paper submitted by the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN) and the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG) on establishing a UN-designated international year of asteroid awareness and planetary defense. This initiative can benefit all nations and is a unique opportunity to come together as an international community to address one of the most existential challenges there is.

Chair, my delegation would also like to comment on recent discussions surrounding the establishment of an agenda item on "Dark and Quiet Skies." The United States has telescopes and observatories across the country and collaborates with a wide range of Member States on astronomy. Astronomy is a priority for my government and we appreciate the rich history of many other delegations in this area.

The United States also operates and has private sector entities that operate satellites, including those within large constellations. These space objects provide indispensable services to enhance communication, improve disaster preparedness and recovery, and facilitate sustainable development.

Of course, these benefits are also accompanied by challenges. Rather than, to use an English saying, "bury our heads in the sand" and ignore the connection between these two topics, my delegation strongly supports the work of Chile, Spain, South Africa, and other Member States to bring this discussion to UNCOPUOS to find a solution.

It is disheartening that we have been unable to find consensus on an approach to this topic after three years. A constructive discussion of issues related to Dark and Quiet Skies – focused on mitigating the effects of satellites and satellite constellations on astronomy – should not be controversial. We regret that a small number of delegations have blocked this discussion in order to polarize the concept of a "Dark and Quiet Skies" agenda item, undermining the vision presented by the cosponsors of the original CRP with aggressive and inappropriate rhetoric on how to determine which space objects are "legitimate targets" for destruction, and other issues that are far outside the mandate and expertise of this forum. Some delegations have even stated that astronomy is a small, unimportant topic, which we find highly objectionable – and factually inaccurate. Perhaps this reveals exactly why a new agenda item on "Dark and Quiet Skies" is needed here in Vienna.

Chair, in presenting their objections to establishing an agenda item on Dark and Quiet Skies, these delegations have demanded, instead, an agenda item on "large constellations in all their aspects." To establish an agenda item dedicated to "all their aspects," however, would prove redundant with existing agenda items of this Committee and its Subcommittees, as well as other UN entities, and is unlikely to constructively address the opportunities and challenges posed by these systems. This Subcommittee should not sacrifice constructive technical discussions on an issue like "Dark and Quiet Skies," which is

firmly within UNCOPUOS's mandate and expertise, to instead inject security issues into this forum or create parallel processes, as some propose, in the UN Fourth Committee.

My delegation welcomes constructive discussion on large constellations, and reaffirms that there are ample agenda items within UNCOPUOS and its Subcommittees to engage in this dialogue, including space debris, the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, general exchange of views on the legal aspects of space traffic management, space and sustainable development, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes, among others.

Other topics related to large constellations are better addressed – and indeed, are being addressed – in other committees and bodies of the UN system.

As such, our job here at STSC is to avoid duplication of effort and to leverage this Subcommittee's unique scientific and technical expertise to address challenges only this body can address. The issue of "Dark and Quiet Skies" is a clear example of such an issue, which this Subcommittee should not ignore. The United States is committed to work domestically, internationally, and with the academic community and private sector, to move forward on the issue of "Dark and Quiet Skies."

Finally, Chair, let me express my delegation's appreciation for the "Summit of the Future" and "Pact for the Future" processes in New York. We continue to advocate for this process to highlight the unique role of UNCOPUOS in promoting and advancing the global governance of outer space activities. We also appreciate UNOOSA and Austria's organization of a constructive exchange on "Space and the Summit of the Future" during the World Space Forum last December and we look forward to participating in the preparatory event on the Summit of the Future, "Management and Sustainability of Outer Space Activities," in Lisbon in May 2024.

Thank you Chair.