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to the United
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AUSTRIA, ITEM 8

**Report of the Legal Subcommittee
65th COPUOS (1 – 10 June 2022)
Ambassador Gabriela SELNER**

Chair,
Excellencies – Colleagues,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Space has become vital for our daily lives. The growing number of space activities offers a huge economic potential but also poses a risk to the long-term sustainability of outer space. Multilateral rules and increased international cooperation on legal questions are needed to ensure a safe and sustainable conduct of space activities by all actors. Austria therefore encourages all States, which have not yet done so, to ratify the UN treaties on outer space – the cornerstone of international space law - and consider the implementation of corresponding international guidelines. In addition, international cooperation is needed to develop new sets of rules and coordination mechanisms, in particular in the area of “Space Traffic Management” and the “Exploration, Exploitation and Utilization of Space Resources”.

Through our national Outer Space Act, which was adopted in 2011, we already contribute to responsible behaviour in outer space. In addition, Austria published its new Space Strategy 2030+ last year, which indicates our vision for the future of Austria in Space “People, Climate and Economy: Space is for EVERYONE”. The primary goal of the Space Strategy 2030+ is to support and strengthen the concept of sustainability both on earth and in outer space. And measures foreseen in the strategy explicitly address the sustainable use of outer space in the context of UN space diplomacy and sustainable international space law.

Austria is of the opinion that UNCOPUOS and in particular its Legal Subcommittee is the right forum to promote the progressive development of international space law for the peaceful uses of outer space. To take into account technical aspects, a good exchange with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee will continue to be of utmost importance.

Space Traffic Management

Due to the increase in activities, actors and objects in outer space there is an urgent need for an international space traffic governance regime consisting of technical and regulatory rules. The UN treaties on outer space as well as the international regulations of the ITU already contain basic provisions that are of relevance for the management of space traffic. In addition, a number of issues related to space traffic management are already covered by non-binding international instruments, such as the UNCOPUOS Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and the Guidelines on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space. Austria is of the opinion that the Legal Subcommittee is the right forum to develop a comprehensive multilateral approach to effectively manage space traffic and to fill legal gaps. Any national or regional efforts on the other hand bear the risk of legal fragmentation, which could lead to a deterioration of the safety of space activities. Austria therefore strongly supports the establishment of the newly established Working Group on Long-term Sustainability 2.0 and looks forward to actively contributing to its work.

Space Resources

The growing interest in space activities on celestial bodies shows the urgent need for an international legal regime for space resources. The Outer Space Treaty provides some basic principles on the use of outer space, which nevertheless need to be further developed on a multilateral level. Any space resource activity should be based on the principles of sustainable use of natural resources, avoidance of harmful contamination, and efficiency. In this context, we welcome the establishment of the Working Group on potential legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources. We are sure that the discussions within the working group will lead to increased legal certainty for all space actors in the field of space resources. Austria, during this year's Legal Subcommittee, already provided some potential guiding questions and we look forward to further exchanges. As a party to the "Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial

Bodies”, we are convinced that also the “Moon Treaty” offers some inspiration for the work of the working group.

Capacity building

Capacity building in space law is essential, as it is an important instrument to disseminate knowledge about international space law and policy. Our National Point of Contact for Space Law at the University of Vienna as well as its subpoints at other Austrian universities serve to train the next generation of international space lawyers. In 2022, the European rounds of the Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court Competition were organised by the European Centre for Space Law in collaboration with the Austrian National Point of Contact for Space Law. Twelve European university teams competed against each other virtually in a fictional scenario, showing their legal skills. We congratulate the University of Leiden, which won the European regional rounds, and wish the team all the best for the world finals.

Thank you!