

**OPENING STATEMENT
OMRAN SHARAF, CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION, VIENNA, 31 MAY - 9 JUNE 2023**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Representatives,

I'm honoured to be able to welcome you all to the sixty-sixth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in my second year as the Chair of the Committee. I thank you again for the confidence you have placed in me. I'm also pleased to note that this session is being conducted in-person after quite some time, and to see you all gathered here in such large numbers.

Allow me at the onset to congratulate Ms. Carolina Rêgo Costa of Portugal for her election as the First Vice Chair of the Committee for this session. Ms. Rêgo Costa is replacing Ms. Jenni Tapio of Finland, who has assumed other responsibilities.

I would like to assure you, together with my colleagues in the Bureaux, Ms. Carolina Rêgo Costa of Portugal and Mr. Oleg Ventskovsky of Ukraine, of our commitment to continuing the successful work of the Committee.

Allow me also to extend my appreciation to the Acting Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, Mr. Niklas Hedman, and his dedicated Team of the Secretariat for their outstanding substantive support to the Committee and the excellent preparations for this session.

Distinguished Delegates,

We have witnessed significant advancements in space endeavours since the last session of this distinguished Committee – from getting the first images of early space from the James Webb Space Telescope to the first changing of the orbit of an asteroid and the continuous robotic exploration of the Moon and Mars, this past year serves as a testament to humankind's desire to reach further. This year also marks the 55th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE).

To date, the Committee and its two Subcommittees continue to represent unique platforms for fostering dialogue, strengthening international collaboration in the peaceful uses of outer space and advancing the global governance of outer space activities. This vital role of the Committee and its Subcommittees is particularly important nowadays, when we are witnessing the thriving of space activities, an unprecedented rate in the development of new technologies in the space sector and an increased diversification of space actors.

The governance of space activities remains at the core of the work of the Committee. Let me outline some examples. When in 2021 the Committee agreed on the "Space2030" Agenda: space as a driver of sustainable development, which was then adopted by the General Assembly as resolution 76/3, it achieved a heightened attention of the role of Space for sustainable development, aimed at maximizing the benefits of space science and technology and their applications, taking into account the particular needs of developing countries. This document should hopefully also serve as an important reference in the lead up to the 2023 Summit on Sustainable Development (SDG Summit), also known as the high-level political forum on

sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the General Assembly on 18-19 September this year in New York. In that regard, I'm pleased to note the contribution by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to the SDG Summit political declaration, highlighting the contribution of space science, technology and applications to sustainable socioeconomic development. I sincerely hope space will find its place in this important political document. I also look forward to seeing the results of the mid-term review of the "Space2030" Agenda by the Committee in 2025 and its report to the General Assembly.

On 12 December 2022, during its 77th session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on Space and Global Health (A/RES/77/120), developed under the purview of the Committee by the Working Group on Space and Global Health that paves the way for greater coordination and cooperation among all relevant actors in key space activities relevant to global health and fosters the exchange of ideas and data between the space and health sectors. The resolution, that has led to the establishment of the Space and Global Health Network and Platform, urges United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations to support the development of, access to and application of space solutions for global and public health.

Furthermore, during the 77th session of the General Assembly on 27 October 2022, a joint panel discussion of the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee) and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly was held that addressed possible challenges to space security and sustainability as cross-cutting issues between the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and that of the open-ended working group.

These are just but a few examples of when the topics on outer space governance and sustainability have been elevated to a higher level of an international discourse, with the Committee, as the institutional home for the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, at its core.

Distinguished Delegates,

The relevance of the Committee is also continuously marked by the growing interest of Member States and space-related international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to join and engage in the dialogue on space activities within the Committee and its Subcommittees. This year, and as per General Assembly resolution A/RES/77/121, I have the honour of welcoming Guatemala and Uzbekistan as the newest members of the Committee. I also welcome the Association for the Development of the Atlantic International Research Centre, the Access Space Alliance, The Hague Institute for Global Justice, and the International Peace Alliance (Space) as the newest international organizations with observer status with the Committee.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee and their respective Working Groups made considerable progress this year, both in advancing cooperation in the use of space tools for sustainable development, and in enhancing the understanding of regulatory frameworks and mechanisms to that effect.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Juan Francisco Facetti of Paraguay and Ms. Nomfuneko Majaja of South Africa on their skilful guidance of the work of the Subcommittees. Likewise, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Prakash Chauhan and Mr. Umamaheswaran R. of India, Mr. Sam Harbison of the United Kingdom, Ms. Franziska Knur of Germany, Mr. Ian Grosner of

Brazil, Mr. Andrzej Misztal of Poland, and Mr. Steven Freeland of Australia, for their excellent leadership of the respective Working Groups of the Subcommittees in this 2023 session cycle.

The Working Group of the Whole agreed on several recommendations under the multi-year workplan on the governance and method of work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. Reinforcing the commitment of States to space sustainability, the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, which will also meet during the current session, continues its work as per multi-year workplan, which started in 2022, identifying and studying challenges and considering possible new guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities; sharing experiences, practices and lessons learned from voluntary national implementation of the adopted Guidelines; and raising awareness and building capacity, in particular among emerging space nations and developing countries.

The Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Spaces adopted its final report conducted under its multi-year workplan that has been made available to the Committee at this session as document A/AC.105/C.1/124, and recommended a new, five-year workplan. The Working Group on the Status and Application of the Five United Nations Treaties on Outer Space agreed to continue its work on the questionnaires and advanced its work on recommendations to be addressed to States of registry to support the enhancement of registration practices. The Working Group on the Definition and Delimitation of Outer Space Activities, which convenes on a biennial basis, continued to consider matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space. The Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities will continue its substantively rich discussions on matters within its mandate at this current session of the Committee and will hopefully reach consensus on the international conference on space resources to take place in 2024.

I also note with appreciation the continued work carried out by the three international bodies whose establishment was facilitated by the Subcommittee, namely the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG), the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG) and the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN).

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me also commend the work of the Office for Outer Space Affairs in its outstanding role as the substantive Secretariat to our intergovernmental bodies and through its other areas of work in bringing the benefits of space to humankind. In that regard, I am pleased to note the activities being undertaken by the Office through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), as well as in its capacities as secretariats to the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems, the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG), and the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space).

The Office continues to discharge the substantive responsibilities of the Secretary-General under the treaties and principles on outer space, including with regard to the United Nations Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space. As the platform for multilateral cooperation, the Office also continues to organize World Space Forum for advancing dialogues among all stakeholders, builds capacities in space law and policy, supports regional centres for space science and technology education, conducts awareness-raising and outreach, and promotes access to space4all and space sustainability. I am pleased to note the continuous commitment and efforts of

the Office in this regard.

Distinguished Delegates,

In closing, with your cooperation and valuable contributions, I am looking forward to the success of this session. I am confident that we will deliver on our tasks and mandates by engaging in dialogue on all important topics we have before us on the agenda. I'm also pleased to note the numerous side-events and space exhibits taking place in conjunction with this session.

I thank you for your kind attention.
