

**Statement by Ambassador Laura S.H. Holgate,
U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Vienna
COPUOS Legal Subcommittee
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Thank you, Chair. The United States is looking forward to working with you to ensure a successful session. We thank the Secretary, and all staff members of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs, for their work preparing for this session. I particularly wish to take this opportunity to recognize Acting UNOOSA Director, Niklas Hedman, for his unflagging commitment to shepherding the Office through a longer-than-expected transition.

Human achievements in outer space over the last year – everything from record-breaking new imagery from the James Webb Space Telescope to moving an asteroid in humanity’s first-ever planetary defense demonstration – make clear that the importance of international cooperation continues to grow. The multilateral work of this Subcommittee continues to further our understanding regarding the application of international law to current and future space activities.

The United States will continue to be guided by the four core – and widely accepted – treaties on outer space: the Outer Space Treaty; the Rescue and Return Agreement; and the Liability and Registration Conventions. Under the legal framework of these treaties, the exploration and use of space by nations, international organizations, and private entities has flourished. We are proud of the space sector in the United States, and we see international law – including international space law – as a key tool to enable these actors to flourish in a safe and sustainable environment.

In that regard, we recognize the continued importance of meeting our obligations to authorize and supervise the activities of U.S. actors in outer space. One way we do that is by maintaining and updating our domestic governance framework regarding space activities. In September 2022, Vice President Kamala Harris, chair of the National Space Council, requested departments and agencies to develop a proposal for the authorization and supervision of nongovernmental in-space activities. We look forward to sharing a technical presentation during this session on the work to date of the U.S. government to meet this objective.

NASA's successful launch of the Orion spacecraft – on a path that traveled further than any other spacecraft ever built for human spaceflight – marked a critical milestone in the Artemis program, which will send the first woman and the first person of color to the Moon. NASA is working with commercial and international partners to establish the Gateway, which will provide essential support for long-term human return to the lunar surface and provide a staging point for deep space exploration.

The Artemis Accords, a non-binding set of principles that set out how we will implement our obligations under the Outer Space Treaty as we live and work together in space and guide Artemis activities, have now been signed by 23 nations, spanning every corner of the globe, and representing a diverse set of space interests and capabilities. We welcome the five countries that signed the Accords since the last LSC session concluded: Colombia, France, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Saudi Arabia.

The Artemis Accords' principles also help guide the United States' substantive work in this Subcommittee, including, in particular, in the Working Group on the Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities. The 2021 U.S. Space

Priorities Framework underscores the United States' commitment to preserving space for current and future generations, including through leadership in strengthening global governance of space activities. The Legal Subcommittee and its working groups is a primary forum for the international community to engage in promoting, upholding, and strengthening this governance framework.

Chair, even as we work in this body to uphold international law and global governance of human activities in the peaceful uses and exploration of outer space, the very foundation of the rules-based international system on our planet is under assault by one member of this Committee. 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, members of Russia's forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine. Commercial satellite imagery has contributed compelling evidence that will help the international community hold Russia to account for these atrocities.

Thank you, Chair.