

Canadian Statement
Agenda Item 9 – Future Role and Method of Work of the Committee.
Delivered by: Eleonora Agnew, Canadian Space Agency

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Legal Subcommittee
Sixty-second session, Vienna, March 20-31, 2023

Madame Chair, Distinguished delegates,

Canada would like to thank the Secretariat for their on-going efforts to advance the important work of this Committee and its subcommittees. We would like to acknowledge the on-going administrative and financial challenges associated with conducting these sessions in the hybrid format. We are encouraged by recent indications that many member States support returning to in-person sessions. In-person participation is essential in order to return to two, three-hour plenary sessions daily, making more time available for simultaneous interpretation and enhanced interactive exchanges amongst member States, thus ensuring the Committee's capacity to make progress.

This Committee continues to grow, which Canada believes is a strong indication of the importance of the work and sees this as a very positive development. However, it does not come without challenges to the effective conduct of our sessions. In that vein, we are supportive of continuing some of the timesaving measures begun during the pandemic. Specifically, we support the continuation of the five-minute limit for statements in order to ensure that all member States have the ability to speak with interpretation services. We also support the posting of full statements on the COPUOS website and the webcasting of the plenary sessions as strong capacity building measures.

Canada would also like to continue to encourage member States to submit an annual report of their space activities. Not only is this a significant transparency and capacity and confidence-building endeavour, it helps reduce the need to repeat information in statements.

Madame Chair,

Space is changing at a rapid pace and there are and will continue to be increasing pressures on our agendas to discuss new items as a result of emerging challenges. To ensure we have sufficient time to address these important emerging issues, while still enabling all COPUOS member States to have a say, we would like to propose amending the agenda to combine similar agenda items. This was initially proposed during the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and was widely supported as a means to streamline the agenda while providing space for new items.

Within the Legal Subcommittee, we could perhaps consider combining items 5 (Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space); 8 (Capacity-building in space law); and 7 (National

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legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space) into a new agenda item: “Application and Implementation of the Five United Nations treaties on outer space.” Both capacity building and national space legislation are crucial for the implementation of the outer space treaties by all Member States. There may be other options for combining agenda items and my delegation would be happy to discuss such options. By combining agenda items where they make sense, we would still have sufficient time to discuss these important issues while freeing up time in the agenda to add new items as needed.

Canada would like to raise another issue that was highlighted Monday when we arrived to find a 4 cm thick stack of paper in our pigeon holes, most of which will end up in the recycle box. Reducing paper saves trees and conserves the energy used in converting trees into paper and in the transportation of paper products. In addition, the production of paper produces sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxides which contributes to acid rain, greenhouse gases and water pollution. During the pandemic, we adapted to only electronic copies of all documents. Therefore, Canada proposes that COPUOS implements a policy that only procedural documents, such as reports and resolutions, are printed. All documents will remain on the session website and printed by request.

Madame Chair, distinguished delegates,

There are two significant events coming up in the next two years. The first, later this year, is the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal Summit and the second is the 2024 UN Summit of the Future. It is imperative that the significant role of space in achieving the objectives set out during both events is well represented. To that end, Canada supports the efforts of the COPUOS bureau and the Secretariat towards the development of consensus-based inputs that showcase the unique role of UN COPUOS and its subcommittees in the peaceful uses of outer space and the benefits of space for achieving the sustainable development goals.

Thank you for your kind attention.