



63rd session of the Legal Subcommittee
15 – 26 April 2024
Statement by Australia
Agenda Item: 4 – General exchange of views

On behalf of my delegation, I extend Australia's sincere thanks to the outgoing Chair, Ms Nomfuneko Majaja of South Africa, for her able leadership of the Subcommittee over the past two years.

We warmly welcome the new Chair, Mr Santiago Ripol Carulla of Spain, and congratulate him on his appointment as Chair of this Subcommittee. Australia offers you our full support.

The Australian delegation commends the Secretariat for its continued support of the Committee and Subcommittees.

Let me begin by reaffirming Australia's support for the work of the Subcommittee. Australia is proud to be a founding member of the Committee and a State Party to the five United Nations Space Treaties. We reiterate that the Outer Space Treaty is the cornerstone of the international legal framework governing the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. It contains many

obligations and principles that underpin our discussions in this Subcommittee. We call on those who have ratified the treaty to act consistently with their obligations, including the obligation under Article IV regarding nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in space.

Australia's enduring commitment to and respect for international law compels us to draw attention to Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine, which is a gross violation of international law including the UN Charter. More than two years since Russia's full-scale invasion, Australia continues to strongly support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we reiterate our calls on Russia to immediately end its senseless war.

Australia's *Space (Launches and Returns) Act 2018* (the Act) establishes a regulatory framework for the licensing of, and provides safety requirements for, space activities in Australia or involving Australian interests. The Act also implements certain obligations under the United Nations Space Treaties.

Australia is pleased to have recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the assent and commencement of the *Space Activities Act 1998* – the forerunner to the Act.

Australia was pleased to present at the recent United Nations/Portugal Policy Symposium on Monday 11 March. Australia's presentation provided a regulatory perspective on our approach to space sustainability. This included in relation to environmental considerations, space debris mitigation,

implementation of the Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, and lunar activities.

Australia is committed to the continuous improvement of our regulatory framework, in consultation with our space sector and consistent with our international obligations. As part of this approach, Australia established the Space Regulation Advisory Collective (SRAC) in 2023.

The SRAC is an open network of non-government space sector representatives, which was formed to receive input on a range of space regulation issues and to inform the regulatory function of the Australian Space Agency. This includes facilitated forums on dedicated topics.

In October 2023, the Australian Space Agency hosted an SRAC forum on the regulation of on-orbit operations, where controlled changes are made to the orbital parameters and/or physical components of a space object in space. This included discussion of orbital manoeuvres, Active Debris Removal and On Orbit Servicing.

Australia is committed to working with Member States of the Committee to address emerging issues, including in the exploration, exploitation and utilisation of space resources.

Australia is pleased to submit a Conference Room Paper (CRP) at this session entitled “*Consideration of general themes and obligations, commitments or guidelines to an activity contributing to exploration and scientific investigation of the Moon*”.

This CRP outlines some general themes and obligations, commitments or guidelines of the existing framework that may apply to an Australian activity contributing to exploration and scientific investigation of the Moon.

We look forward to engaging on the CRP during meetings of the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities.

Australia is committed to its international obligations, including under Article XI of the Outer Space Treaty.

Australia looks forward to contributing to discussions on this topic within the Working Group on the Status and Application of the five United Nations Treaties on Outer Space.

The Subcommittee plays an important role in facilitating the development of rules and norms in space; as well as facilitating a consensus-based approach to

addressing emerging challenges. Australia looks forward to continuing to engage with Member States in this Subcommittee.