

New Zealand Statement, Item 4

Agenda Item Four: General exchange of views
Sixty-Third Session of the Legal Subcommittee of COPUOS
15 - 26 April 2024

As Delivered

Thank you Chair

Tēnā tatou katoa or greetings in Te Reo Māori, New Zealand's indigenous language. We would like to join our colleagues in congratulating you on your appointment as chair and assure you of New Zealand's full support in your endeavours. We would also like to recognise the work of the secretariat.

Chair

In a subcommittee focused on international law our work is predicated on the adherence by States to their international legal obligations. The Outer Space Treaty is of principal importance to this forum, and we emphasise that any breach of the Treaty - would be seriously concerning including Article IV, which prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons in orbit.

In the same context, the peaceful use of space is fundamentally linked with respect for international law on Earth. I reiterate New Zealand's condemnation of Russia's illegal war of aggression in Ukraine, which represents a grave and ongoing breach of international law.

Chair

As host of commercial launch operations and with a growing and dynamic space sector New Zealand encourages continued cooperation on the issue of space debris, debris removal, and long-term space sustainability. We are committed to acting responsibly in this area and will continue to participate in developing international best practice.

Chair

As we come together to discuss challenges such as space traffic management and debris mitigation - we keep front of mind the many benefits such space activity, including large satellite constellations, delivers here on Earth.

We highlight the important role that LSC has in supporting an international legal framework which enables the growth of the space sector globally and facilitates the effective cooperation of States and other space stakeholders as we work together to overcome the shared challenges of the space environment.

A particularly significant developing capability in space is the exploration, exploitation and utilisation of space resources. We recognise the many benefits of these activities, including for enabling the deeper exploration of our solar system and beyond.

To enable these activities, we recognise the need to supplement the existing international law with detailed rules to ensure the safety and sustainability of these activities, including protection of the space environment. We see the benefits of a multilateral approach to these issues and the potential for non-binding instruments and fora – such as the Artemis Accords – to guide the activities of States and to be a useful complement in supporting the development of rules and norms in this regard.

As space activity reaches ever further, we are seeing new and more frequent activity on and around the Moon. These exciting endeavours will new bring knowledge and also new challenges. We welcome the support shown by COPUOS members for the Romanian proposal for an Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultation and look forward to further discussions about this during this session.

Chair

Just as it is important to ensure the international legal framework continues to function well, domestic regulatory frameworks deserve continued attention to ensure they best support the peaceful, safe and sustainable use of space.

In line with the release of our National Space Policy last year, New Zealand is committed to ensure its regulatory system, first implemented in 2017, remains fit-for-purpose. To this end a technical review of the operation and effectiveness of our regulatory system has been completed, and policy work is now under way to implement changes, in particular to address to requirements of novel space technologies.

We would, of course, be happy to discuss these changes with delegates who are interested in the margins of this session.

Chair and distinguished delegates, we look forward to continuing these important discussions with you over the next two weeks.

Thank you.