

**Statement by the U.S. Ambassador, Ms. Laura S.H. Holgate,
on Agenda Item 4, “General Exchange of Views,” February 7, 2022**

Thank you, Mr. Chair. The U.S. delegation congratulates you on your election as Chair of this distinguished subcommittee, and we look forward to working with you during the next two years. We also thank the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Secretariat for their tireless work to ensure COPUOS adapts to these unprecedented times and continues to advance its mission. 2021 was an exceptional year for America’s space program. We completed our busiest year of development yet in low-Earth orbit, made history on Mars and on the Artemis program to land humans on the Moon, successfully launched the next-generation space telescope, and much more – all while safely operating during a pandemic and welcoming new leadership under the Biden-Harris Administration.

The United States appreciates our international partnerships with so many of the 100 Member States of this distinguished subcommittee. The work we do here helps us to safely and responsibly explore and use outer space for the benefit of humanity.

Unfortunately, I must also note the reckless actions of one member of this subcommittee. On November 15, 2021, one Member State intentionally destroyed one of its own space objects, generating over 1,500 pieces of trackable debris and likely hundreds of thousands of pieces of debris too small to track but large enough to threaten human and robotic missions. This dangerous and irresponsible action will significantly increase the risk to astronauts and cosmonauts on the International Space Station, as well as other human spaceflight activities. The safety of all nations seeking to explore and use outer space for peaceful purposes has been carelessly endangered by this action – an action that is inconsistent with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines approved by this Subcommittee at its 44th session.

Despite this incident, Mr. Chair, 2021 was a banner year for humans in space. NASA welcomed back to Earth the first two sets of commercial crew astronauts to complete expedition missions aboard the International Space Station and launched Crew-3 to the orbiting laboratory. The Biden-Harris Administration announced its commitment to extend ISS operations through 2030 and to work with our international partners to continue the groundbreaking research conducted in this unique orbiting laboratory.

Beyond low-Earth orbit, the world will once again witness America's ingenuity and inspiration as NASA returns to the Moon and on to Mars through Artemis. NASA will land the first woman and first person of color on the lunar surface to sustainably use what we learn there to enable humanity's next giant leap – sending astronauts to Mars. To pave the way for future crewed lunar missions, NASA's Space Launch System rocket and Orion spacecraft are ready for the Artemis I mission planned to launch this spring. There are now 15 signatories of the Artemis Accords. These shared principles, which reaffirm the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, enable a safe and transparent outer space environment for all of humanity. We welcome all who have committed to these principles and encourage other nations to do the same.

In September, NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey launched Landsat 9, which continues the 50-year legacy of observing the Earth's surface, allowing us to track the impacts of climate change.

In November, the United States joined more than 100 countries at COP26, reaffirming our commitment to provide the space-based data needed to understand, mitigate, and adapt to our changing planet.

In December, the world watched as NASA, in partnership with the European and Canadian space agencies, launched the James Webb Space Telescope, and watched again in January as it was fully deployed in orbit, nearly 1 million miles from Earth. JWST will help us understand the origins of the universe and our place within it, by peering back to reveal the first stars and galaxies that formed about 13.5 billion years ago in the aftermath of the Big Bang.

Mr. Chair, since the dawn of the space age, the United States has used satellites to understand our home planet more fully, improve lives, and safeguard our future. In this regard, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, together with partners in Europe, Japan, Korea, and India, provide decision makers around the world with access to the high-resolution observations to better understand and predict environmental threats across land, sea, air, and even space.

Mr. Chair, NASA and UNOOSA continue to enhance their longstanding partnership since they signed a Memorandum of Understanding about 14 months ago. The United States will continue to lead in expanding international space cooperation to broaden the benefits of space for all humankind. We look forward to continuing our work together to explore and use space to improve life for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Chair.