

Canada
Agenda Item 12 – Future Role and Method of Work of the Committee
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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Scientific and Technical Subcommittee
Sixty-First Session, Vienna, 29 January – 9 February, 2024

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Canada would like to thank the Secretariat for their ongoing efforts to advance the important work of this Committee, in particular the excellent work being done by members of the Secretariat to capture the discussions taking place in the Long-term Sustainability Working Group. We also wish to thank the outgoing Chair of COPUOS, Mr. Omran Sharaf and the outgoing Chair of this Subcommittee for their leadership over the past two years. Through this leadership the Committee now has a streamlined agenda with an opportunity to consider the addition of a new agenda item and enable suitable time to discuss each agenda item. The work undertaken to reach consensus on changes to the agenda of this Subcommittee exemplifies the Vienna Spirit that COPUOS and its Subcommittees are known for, and we wish to thank all delegates for their collaborative and constructive approach in this regard. We continue to believe that all decisions, short of routine administrative, by COPUOS and its Subcommittees should continue to be done by consensus.

We welcome the growing membership of this Subcommittee, given the importance of its work; however, we continue to be mindful of the ability to have fulsome discussions. Therefore, we continue to support the utility of the five-minute limit for plenary statements so that every member who wishes to speak can do so. We encourage State members of the committee to submit an annual report of their activities, which will serve to make detailed information available in the spirit of transparency and confident building while reducing the need to include such information in statements.

Chair,

Canada wishes to recall that at the conclusion of the 66th session of COPUOS, that a decision was taken to address the addition of an agenda item on Dark and Quiet Skies during this session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. In that regard, we wish to express

our full support for the establishment of an agenda item on this important topic in order to ensure that this Committee continues to play a central role in issues directly relevant to the use of outer space for peaceful purposes. We note with appreciation the leadership of Chile, Spain, South Africa and COPUOS observer organizations in establishing a Group of Friends on Dark and Quiet Skies. The Group of Friends initiative is a tangible interim step to preserve the momentum on this topic. However, there is also strong value in having this discussion be part formally a part of COPUOS' remit, so that everyone can have their voice heard.

Discussing this in COPUOS ensures that UN Member States remain at the heart of decision-making on these critical matters and involves them in an open, inclusive, transparent, and consensus-based manner. Lack of concrete progress on this important issue dilutes the role and influence of the Committee and is potentially creating a situation wherein other UN entities are going to overlap mandates with this Committee. We continue to believe that it is critical that the discussion ensures a fair and balanced voice between the astronomy community, government, and private satellite operators and it is important to balance these considerations with the provision of critical services to previously unserved and often remote communities.

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

We wish to briefly raise the topic of the 'space track' of the Summit of the Future and welcome that it will be a Member State-driven process. The Summit of the Future is a valuable means to amplify some of the key emerging trends and challenges to governance that we are facing the space environment such as space debris mitigation, space traffic management and space resource activities; topics that this Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee have been considering for some time. We wish to thank Portugal for its ongoing leadership of the series of 'Management and Sustainability of Outer Space Activities' sessions as additional opportunities for member States to engage on these important issues and we will continue to support this process. We believe its very important that the outcome of discussions on the space track underscore COPUOS' central role in space governance and do not lead to duplication or dilution of COPUOS functions. We look forward to further dialogue with the Secretariat on the status of preparations for the Summit of the Future.

Thank you for your kind attention.