

(As prepared for delivery)

**October 16, 2014**

**Statement by Kenneth Hodgkins, Advisor, United States Department of State**

**Agenda Item 49, Fourth Committee: International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I first would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman and thank you for your leadership of the Fourth Committee. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the distinguished members of the Bureau.

Since we last met, the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its subcommittees made a substantial contribution to promoting international space cooperation. In this regard, the United States wishes to express appreciation to the Chairman of COPUOS, Azzedine Oussedik of Algeria, the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, Elod Both of Hungary, and the Chair of the Legal Subcommittee, Kai-Uwe Schrogl of Germany, for their work over the past year. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the staff of the Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) for their superb work over the past year supporting the Committee and its subcommittees. And, my delegation warmly welcomes Ms. Simonetta Di Pippo as the new Director of OOSA. We are confident that under her leadership the office will continue its stellar work in support of the Committee and promoting peaceful international space cooperation.

This past session of COPUOS was convened on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of perhaps the most significant technological feat of our time. July 20<sup>th</sup> marked the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the lunar landing of Apollo 11. On that date in 1969, astronaut Neil Armstrong cemented in history the first time a human stepped on the lunar surface. This wondrous achievement led to five additional lunar landings by United States astronauts, each making significant contributions to our understanding of the moon. While much of our attention today is focused on the application of space techniques to the understanding and solution of terrestrial problems, space exploration remains the ultimate objective of the United States as we seek answers to fundamental questions of the origins of the universe and life itself. Project Apollo was an important early step in that ongoing process of seeking new knowledge, and we and our international partners have built upon this legacy with the International Space Station, a critical exploration resource we are leveraging to support future human missions to an asteroid and Mars.

As the only standing body of the UN concerned exclusively with the peaceful uses of outer space, COPUOS has been extremely successful in fostering international cooperation towards this end. Whereas other UN organs, including the First Committee, hold competence specifically to consider disarmament and international security matters relating to outer space, COPUOS offers us a forum focused on promoting the cooperative achievement – and sharing – of benefits from space exploration and use by all nations.

In accordance with the U.S. National Space Policy of 2010, the United States is placing increased emphasis on international cooperation to promote the peaceful use of outer space in a wide range of areas. We are working closely with the United Nations and with other countries and organizations to continue to address the growing problem of space debris and to promote “best practices” for sustainable use of space. We will also continue to pursue pragmatic transparency and confidence-building measures to mitigate the risk of mishaps, misperceptions, and miscalculations. The U.S. Space Policy reaffirms the longstanding U.S. policy that we are open to space-related confidence building and arms control concepts and proposals, provided they meet the rigorous criteria of equitability, effective verifiability, and consistency with our national security interests.

On January 9, 2014, the United States hosted a very successful ministerial-level International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF), in Washington, D.C., which provided an opportunity for nations to strengthen international cooperative efforts, highlight the benefits to humankind of national investment in space exploration, and discuss policy issues relevant to the exploration, long-term sustainability, development and utilization of space.

During ISEF, representatives from 32 nations plus the European Space Agency and the European Commission met to further advance the exploration and utilization of space and to highlight the direct benefit of these activities to humankind.

Although ISEF was largely focused on the importance of space exploration, participants also acknowledged that COPOUS is an important venue in which nations can continue to discuss important issues such as the long-term sustainability of the space environment for future use. Along these lines, the United States was pleased to join Russia and China in co-sponsoring UN General Assembly resolution 68/50 on transparency and confidence building measures (TCBMs) in outer space activities. It specifically highlights the contributions of COPUOS to the development and implementation of TCBMs that increase the security, safety and sustainability of outer space. The resolution also refers the report of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on space TCBMs (A/68/189) to COPUOS and several other UN bodies for further consideration. In the view of my delegation, the GGE report contains a wealth of valuable information and highly relevant recommendations on what states and the UN can do to ensure the safe and sustainable use of outer space. At this time, we would like to highlight several parts of the report that deserve attention.

The GGE report’s discussion of “Coordination” suggests that a UN inter-agency mechanism could provide a useful platform for the promotion and effective implementation of TCBMs for space activities. It is also worth noting that the Secretary General of the UN has stated his support for the Group’s recommendation to establish coordination between various entities of the United Nations Secretariat and other institutions involved in outer space activities. In this regard, perhaps the interagency meeting on space (UN Space), which is organized by UNOOSA, could fill this role.

Additionally, we note that the GGE specifically recommends that as specific unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral TCBMs are agreed to, States should regularly review the

implementation of such measures and discuss additional ones that may be necessary. There could be a role for COPUOS in this regard.

Finally, in the report's discussion of "Information exchange and notifications related to outer space activities" and "risk reduction notifications" the Experts suggested measures that are directly relevant to the work we are doing on the long-term sustainability of space activities. In this regard, we welcome COPUOS inviting Member States to "submit their views on the modalities of making practical use of the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts as they related to and/or could prove instrumental in ensuring the safety of space operations, and in the context of the ongoing work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities." The U.S. intends to submit our views on this topic to be made available for the fifty-second session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and we look forward to hearing the views of other delegations. The results of this work could be submitted to the General Assembly and discussed in a joint ad hoc meeting of the First and Fourth Committees during the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the Assembly in October 2015.

There were notable achievements this year in COPUOS and its subcommittees that deserve our praise.

In the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC), we would like to especially note the progress made by the STSC and its Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Space Activities, under the Chairmanship of Peter Martinez of South Africa. We commend Mr. Martinez for his diligent efforts prior to, during, and since the STSC session to continue work on this agenda item. The United States believes this topic is very timely due to the increasing number of space actors, spacecraft, and space debris. It is essential that we come together to agree on measures that can be employed to reduce the risks to space operations for all. We are prepared to work productively in the Working Group to achieve that objective, and hope that we can reach consensus on long-term sustainability guidelines during 2016.

As we have in past years, we again take this opportunity to note that COPUOS and its Legal Subcommittee (LSC) have a distinguished history of working through consensus to develop space law in a manner that promotes space exploration. The Legal Subcommittee played a key role in establishing the primary Outer Space Treaties -- the Outer Space Treaty, the Rescue and Return Agreement, and the Liability and Registration Conventions. Under the legal framework of these treaties, space exploration by nations, international organizations and, now, private entities has flourished. As a result, space technology and services contribute immeasurably to economic growth and improvements in the quality of life around the world.

At this year's session, the Subcommittee continued its multi-year work plan entitled "Review of the international mechanisms for cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space." The United States is particularly pleased that the Subcommittee established a working group under the chairmanship of Setsuko Aoki of Japan. In accordance with the work plan, the Subcommittee conducted an exchange of information on the range of existing international space cooperation mechanisms. In its upcoming sessions, the Subcommittee will continue to take stock of the range of international cooperative mechanisms employed by Member States with a

view to developing an understanding of the range of collaborative mechanisms employed by States and international organizations and when and why different mechanisms are favored by States. This information will be helpful to Member States as they consider relevant mechanisms to facilitate future cooperative endeavors in the peaceful uses of outer space. In this regard, this item is particularly timely in that 2017, the final year of consideration of this agenda item, coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty.

Thank you for your attention.