

UK General Statement, COPUOS 64th Session

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The United Kingdom is pleased to have the opportunity to share with you the progress and developments we have made since the last meeting of this committee in 2019.

The UK will shortly be releasing a National Space Strategy. Through this strategy, the UK recognises the importance of space in the fight against climate change, and in supporting the UK's ambitions to become a science superpower, and to build a better and greener world in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UK's National Space Strategy, along with the establishment of the UK National Space Council in June 2020 – which is chaired by our Prime Minister – will provide strategic direction across the whole of the UK Government on future space activities and investment.

Chair,

Regarding our spaceflight ambitions, the UK Space Industry Regulations were signed into law in our Parliament this year on 29 July. These new Regulations will enable a range of commercial spaceflight activities, including horizontal and vertical launch from the UK.

An example of the new type of missions that are being licensed from the UK is the OneWeb constellation. As other, similar systems start to be deployed, we must collectively work together to ensure near-term safety and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

Chair,

The UK believes that space has an important contribution to make to the Sustainable Development Goals – the SDGs. To support developing countries, and the implementation of the SDGs, the UK Space Agency's award-winning initiative, the International Partnership Programme (IPP), uses the UK space sector's capabilities in satellite technology and data services to develop space-enabled projects in partnership with developing countries. The International Partnership Programme has an impressive portfolio of 43 grant-funded projects benefitting 47 countries, in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America, which tackle global development challenges such as climate and disaster resilience, food security, maritime safety, health, and education.

Chair,

I already mentioned the importance of space in the fight against climate change. The UK is delighted to be assuming the Presidency of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties – COP26 – in partnership with Italy, later this year. We were proud to be the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end our country's contribution to global warming by 2050. The

UK's expertise in the analysis and exploitation of climate data from satellites is helping the development of global climate change policy and we are excited by the potential that space has to help combat climate change, including through supporting and improving climate adaptation.

Chair,

We also attach great importance to the Long-Term Sustainability of the Outer Space Environment. Sustainability is just as important in space as it is on earth. To achieve that, the UK is playing a leading role in supporting an inclusive approach to capacity building and implementation of the Long-Term Sustainability guidelines – the LTS guidelines.

The UK is proud to have established our first project with UNOOSA in January 2021. There are four parts to this project:

1. The publication of the LTS guidelines in an accessible format in all six official UN languages;
2. Hosting a series of three international expert events to promote space sustainability by identifying examples of the sustainable use of outer space;
3. Supporting Member States to engage constructively in the upcoming LTS working group; and
4. Identifying gaps and challenges associated with LTS guideline implementation, so as to support the capacity-building needs of all countries.

The UK will showcase this work at a side event that we are co-hosting with UNOOSA on Tuesday 31 August between 5.15pm and 6.15pm Vienna time. We hope many of you will join us, and Director Simonetta Di Pippo, for that event.

Chair,

As part of the UK's Presidency of the G7 this year, delegates pledged to take action to tackle the growing hazard of space debris. The G7 published a Common Statement recognising the importance of the LTS guidelines and the need for a collaborative approach for space traffic management. This important issue was also reflected in the G7 Leaders' Communique.

Additionally, Astroscale – the innovative private company that works on the safe and sustainable development of space – launched a demo programme from their UK operations centre in March this year, which aims to tackle space debris with a spacecraft that uses a magnetic plate, which can pull the debris into freefall to burn up in Earth's atmosphere.

Chair,

The UK looks forward to the establishment of a working group in COPUOS to address the use of in-situ space resources and we welcome the political interest in this. We note, however, that other issues, such as spectrum and Geostationary Satellite Orbit slot allocation by the ITU, are best discussed at the ITU in Geneva.

Chair,

In 2020, the UK was a signatory to the Artemis Accords with NASA. By signing the Artemis Accords, the UK joined international partners to agree a common set of principles to guide cooperation in space exploration for years to come. The Artemis Accords will ensure a shared understanding of safe operations, use of space resources, minimising space debris and sharing scientific data.

Finally, Chairman, distinguished delegates, we look forward to a productive session. You have the UK's full support in furthering joint cooperation and dialogue in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space.