

Elements for the terms of reference, methods of work and workplan of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities

Non-paper by the Chair of the Working Group

Background

1. At its sixty-second session in 2019, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space decided to establish, under a five-year workplan, a working group under the agenda item on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (A/74/20, para. 165).
2. At that session, the Committee also decided that the working group would agree on its own terms of reference, methods of work and dedicated workplan and that the working group would be guided by the following framework:
 - (a) Identifying and studying challenges and considering possible new guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. This could be done by taking into consideration existing documents including, inter alia, documents A/AC.105/C.1/L.367 and A/AC.105/2019/CRP.16;
 - (b) Sharing experiences, practices and lessons learned from voluntary national implementation of the adopted guidelines;
 - (c) Raising awareness and building capacity, in particular among emerging space nations and developing countries (A/74/20, para.167).
3. At its fifty-eighth session in 2021 the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee elected Umamaheswaran R. (India) as Chair of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities and convened the Working Group (A/AC.105/1240, para.195). The Subcommittee recommended that the Committee make arrangements that would afford the Working Group the opportunity to meet at its sixty-fourth session, with the benefit of interpretation services (A/AC.105/1240, para.196).
4. Taking into consideration the ongoing global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the extraordinary arrangements for 2021 cycle of Committee sessions, the Chair of the Working Group on Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities has reviewed the proposals related to the development of a terms of reference, methods of work and dedicated workplan and made himself available for informal conversations in the intersessional period and continues to welcome informal consultations with the State members.

Key elements for the Working Group's terms of reference, methods of work and workplan

5. In order to develop a terms of reference, method of work and workplan that will reach consensus by all member States, the Chair proposes that at its upcoming meetings scheduled during the sixty-fourth session of the Committee, the Working Group focus on reaching a common understanding on the following key elements:

- **Goal/landing point** – The desired outcomes of the five-year mandate of the Working Group should be clear and in accordance with the guiding framework.
 - **Structuring the Working Group** – There have been suggestions on the need to structure the discussions of the Working Group through establishment of expert groups, work streams or subgroups to try and manage the large volume of work in limited time. However, there is also a need to ensure the participation of smaller delegations by avoiding parallel discussions. Work should be structured so as to give sufficient priority to all three areas identified in the guiding framework.
 - **Logistics** – Working Group meetings should be arranged at the annual sessions of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and, additionally, likely also at the main session of the Committee each year in Vienna. There may also be a need to mandate in-person intersessional meetings. It may be possible to arrange meetings at locations/venues other than the Vienna International Centre, making use of experts already gathering at other major international space events. It may be helpful to make use of formal Points of Contact to speed communications amongst Working Group members.
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