

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Sixty-fourth Session, Vienna, August 25-September 3rd 2021
Agenda Item 5 – Ways and means of maintaining outer space
for peaceful purposes

Statement delivered by: Colleen Mapendere, Global Affairs Canada

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Since its inception, this Committee has played a role in strengthening space cooperation and space governance vital to ensuring our common goal of a safe, secure, and sustainable space environment.

Over the years, technological advances and new business models have made space more affordable and accessible to new space actors. These trends present the opportunity for space to be a driver for post-COVID economic recovery and supporting the sustainable development goals. While encouraging commercial space activities, governments need to ensure that activities remain for peaceful uses and contribute to the sustainable use of space. Inevitably, space will become more congested and with risk for accidents, debris creation, and even conflict.

The universal adherence to the Outer Space Treaty and its principles serves as the foundation for all space activities and sets the stage for the development of norms of behaviour. The Outer Space Treaty and other core treaties have enabled States to pursue innovative new technologies and programs, which have delivered tremendous benefits to all humankind. No matter how novel or innovative certain space activities may seem, the core United Nations Treaties apply and can successfully guide participants towards peaceful and safe operations. From Canada's perspective, ratification of, accession to, and national implementation of the major space treaties and other international instruments remain a priority.

In Canada's view the way to strengthen the principles in these treaties, to ensure the peaceful uses of space, is through norms of responsible behaviour. These pragmatic and voluntary measures help enhance trust in the space activities and actions of space actors. For instance, transparency measures such as information exchange can reduce the potential for misinterpretation of other's actions. Overall, norms can create the climate of confidence that is necessary to develop future legally-binding measures governing space. In this vein, Canada welcomes the recently released United Nations Secretary General's report on *Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours* as it deepens the discussion on space norms.

Another example of norm development contributing to the maintenance of space for peaceful purposes are the recommendations from the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures (TCBM) in Outer Space Activities. The exchange of information is a simple and effective way to reaffirm our collective commitment to the implementation of the GGE report and demonstrate openness of activities. Canada continues to encourage states to review the GGE report and implement its recommendations and TCBMs.

COPUOS has played an important role in norm-building. The national implementation of voluntary, agreed guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability for Outer Space Activities adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, will strengthen the foundation and pillars of the principles outlined in the Outer Space Treaty. These guidelines help us define responsible behaviour that will ensure the long-term sustainable and peaceful uses of space. We welcome the continuing consideration by the Committee of the implementation of the LTS guidelines as well as the development of new guidelines, under the newly formed LTS working group.

In the spirit of information exchange, Canada has submitted our annual report (2020) on national policies on the use of space to the Scientific and Technical Committee. We again encourage all Member States of COPUOS to contribute to this valuable information sharing opportunity.

Lastly, a recent example, in October 2020 Canada signed the Artemis Accords; a set of principles to guide the safe and sustainable exploration and use of outer space. The Accords comply with and reinforce the signatories' commitment to the existing global space governance. While the Accords represent an important step, more work is needed to further solidify the framework for emerging exploration activities.

Mr. Chair,

In an era of significant changes in space activities and actors, international cooperation and dialogue is essential. Canada remains ready and willing to work with all members towards preserving the space environment so future generations can also benefit from exploration and use of outer space.

Thank you!