

 Permanent  
Mission  
of Austria

to the United  
Nations in Vienna

**AUSTRIA, ITEM 7**

**Report on the Legal Subcommittee**

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**Ambassador Gabriela SELLNER**

Chair,

Excellencies – Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Increased international cooperation on legal questions is necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of space activities. Due to the growing number of satellites in orbit, a multilateral regulatory approach is needed to preserve access to outer space for future generations. Austria, through its Outer Space Act from 2011, already contributes to responsible behavior in outer space. The UN space treaties are the cornerstone of international space law. But they need to be further developed and complemented to be able to respond to new developments. Austria is of the opinion that COPUOS and in particular its Legal Subcommittee is the right forum for discussions about pressing regulatory topics. Those are in particular space debris mitigation, Space Traffic Management and the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources. Due to their technical aspects, a good exchange with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee will continue to be of utmost importance.

**Space Debris Mitigation**

Austria welcomes and supports the international guidelines and standards that have been developed in recent years to mitigate space debris. Those are the Space Debris Mitigation

Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC), UN-COPUOS Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and other related recommendations such as the UN-COPUOS Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Space Activities. The current international legal framework already provides a regulatory basis for responsible behavior in space. Nevertheless, further discussions, in particular on the level of the Legal Subcommittee, are necessary to complement the existing law. On the one hand, more detailed guidelines are needed. On the other hand, new developments such as space debris remediation through on-orbit servicing and the risks of large constellations with regard to the generation of space debris need to be addressed.

#### Space Traffic Management

Due to the increase in space activities, there is also an urgent need for a global governance regime including technical and regulatory rules. Austria is of the opinion that the Legal Subcommittee is the right forum to contribute to the shaping of an international intergovernmental Space Traffic Management. The establishment of legal frameworks for national or regional Space Traffic Managements on the other hand bear the risk of fragmentation of space law and in consequence a general deterioration of the safety of space activities. Space Traffic Management is not explicitly included in the current international regulatory framework for space activities. A starting point for discussions could be to analyze the different international legal instruments with a view to their usefulness for a future Space Traffic Management. In this regard, a multi-tiered hybrid system of binding and non-binding rules could be promoted.

#### Space Resources

The development of an international legal regime for space resources is a pressing topic that needs to take into account the current international legal framework. Austria welcomes the establishment of the working group under the agenda item on the general exchange of views on potential legal models for activities in exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources. We congratulate Mr. Andrzej Misztal and Mr. Steven Freeland on their election as the chair and vice-chair of this working group. We look forward to fruitful discussions and hope for a timely agreement on the terms of reference and workplan.