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Report of the Moon Village Association on the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities

Paper submitted by the Moon Village Association

I. Introduction and Background

1. This report summarizes the definition, status, and planning of the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities (GEGSLA) proposed and hosted by the Moon Village Association (MVA). MVA, being an observer organization of UNCOPUOS, has informed all UNCOPUOS delegations in Vienna, in December 2020, about the creation of GEGSLA and invited them to join it.

II. Lunar governance for sustainable lunar activities

2. The near future will see a multitude of lunar missions through the efforts of both space agencies and commercial stakeholders' efforts. The current lack of coordination mechanisms for lunar activities presents challenges to future missions and could lead to unintentional harmful interference, especially in light of the increased global interest in specific areas like the lunar south pole. The need to preserve the peaceful uses of space, together with the desire to begin a new era of sustainable space exploration, urges the consideration of approaches that promote future lunar sustainability, or recommended practices for upcoming lunar activities.

3. A number of relevant issues will need to be defined in detail to ensure sustainable lunar exploration and settlement in and around the Moon, including, for example, benefits sharing, sharing of information, registration of activities, mitigating the creation of debris in lunar orbit, and coordinating access to natural resources.

4. In 2019, the Moon Village Association (MVA) took the initiative to address these critical issues with the goal of de-risking future lunar missions and increasing global cooperation for lunar exploration and settlement. The initial work of the MVA resulted in the publication of the first edition of its *Best Practices for Sustainable Lunar Activities* on 5 March 2020 for public consultation. The MVA hosted several public webinars, as well as informal discussions with experts from space agencies from all continents. These consultations resulted in the publication of the second edition of the Best Practices on 19 October 2020. This document was intended as an input for further elaboration. The current version of the Best Practices



is available, for information, at: <https://moonvillageassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MVA-Best-Practices-Issue-1-19.10.2020-FINAL.pdf>.

5. The positive feedback received on the Best Practices initiative from several space agencies encouraged the MVA to continue its endeavors in fostering a global discussion on sustainable lunar activities. Therefore, the MVA decided to promote the development of a neutral forum for multi-stakeholder discussions on lunar exploration: The *Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities* (or GEGSLA).

III. Establishment of GEGSLA and its Terms of Reference

6. The MVA will seek to present the various GEGSLA deliverables at the UNCOPUOS and its subcommittees sessions. Given the broad complexity of some of the relevant issues, the MVA would encourage and welcome the continuing interaction and exchange of views between member states with a relevant expertise in the field.

7. In order to achieve its goals, the Group intends to:

(i) Leverage contributions from major stakeholders of the space community, including space agencies, private companies, academia, and international organizations.

(ii) Involve the public by promoting outreach efforts regarding the activities of the Group through the involvement of the participants.

(iii) Serve as a platform to exchange information and views within the space community on key issues for the peaceful and sustainable conduct of lunar activities.

(iv) Support UNCOPUOS or other international fora for the development of an international framework regulating a sustainable lunar activity.

8. The Group is composed of members and observers. They are stakeholders in lunar activities, including representatives from space agencies/government, industry, international organizations, academia, and civil society.

9. Participants of the Group will act in their individual capacity.

10. The Group will operate by consensus.

11. The Group has decided to establish sub-groups to facilitate its work. Inter alia, sub-groups that are addressing the following key topics: benefits sharing, sharing of information, registration of activities, mitigating the creation of debris in lunar orbit and on the lunar surface.

12. The Group is chaired by Dr. Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu (Romania). Its members, at the moment, include 38 experts from the following countries: Austria, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Israel, Kenya, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America.

13. The Group, at the moment, includes about 170 observers from more than 40 countries.

14. Space Agencies and Government representatives not yet included can request to join the Group as a member.

15. There is no limitation on the number of observers, new applications are possible.

IV. Relationship with UNCOPUOS and Deliverables

16. The deliverables of the Group are:

(i) A Recommended Framework and Key Elements for Peaceful, and Sustainable Lunar Activities; and

(ii) Guidelines for lunar activity implementation and operations addressing lunar debris mitigation, benefits sharing, sharing of information, registration of activities, regulating access to natural resources, etc.

17. The Moon Village Association has informed the 58th Session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) (A/AC.105/C.1/2021/CRP.20) and this information has been incorporated in the Subcommittee report. Several delegations have mentioned CRP.20 in their statements and stressed the importance of GEGSLA.

18. The Moon Village Association has informed the 60th Session of the Legal Subcommittee (LSC) (A/AC.105/C.2/2021/CRP.12), and this information has been incorporated in the Subcommittee report. Several delegations have mentioned CRP.12 in their statements and stressed the importance of the GEGSLA.

19. The work of the GEGSLA will take into account the activities resulting from the creation of the Working Group, at the 60th session of the Legal Subcommittee, under the agenda item entitled “General exchange of views on potential legal models for activities in the exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources as indicated in A/AC.105/1243 para 255.

20. Considering the imminence of permanent activities, on the surface and in the orbit of the Moon, carried out by several states, through governmental and private institutions, a multitude of new issues will require regulations at the UN level. MVA proposes and asks the support of Member States in this respect, that starting with the 65th session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 2022, to include the topic of Sustainable Lunar Activities as a new permanent agenda item. This is because the issue includes interlinked complex technical and legal issues.

21. The Group plans to complete the preliminary drafting of its deliverables in 2022. MVA will provide these documents to the 59th Session of the STSC and 61st Session of the LSC as well as 65th UNCOPUOS through MVA, for further consideration and deliberation.

22. MVA will provide the final set of deliverables, related to the Recommended Framework and Guidelines for specific activities implementation (i.e., debris mitigation, etc.), to UNCOPUOS and its subcommittees by the end of 2022 once the GEGSLA will complete all its activities. This could allow UNCOPUOS to start further discussion and deliberation using the deliverables of GEGSLA in 2023.
