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Background Guide

United Nations Of Lunar Affairs

SMIS MUN

Letter from the Executive Board

Hello delegates! Welcome to UNOLA. My name is Simran Panda, and I will be chairing this committee. I am currently a rising senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, studying Astrophysics with a minor in Applied Sciences and Engineering. Outside of coursework I do research in Dr Nicholas Law's Argus Array lab, where our team is building hardware for what will be the highest-throughput sky survey ever attempted, making it the only telescope that can simultaneously observe the entire top hemisphere's night sky. I also Present shows and tech at Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, and this past year I was placed as a Brooke Owens Fellow through which I'm interning with Slooh this summer. When I am not doing any of that, I serve as the President of the High-power Rocketry Club at UNC, where quite frankly me and the homeboys just mess around and watch months of test/labor/ research burn up into ballistic hazards just for the plot :') or I'm hanging out with my tiny cat Tyco-Pico (named after the great Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe obviously).

I have been in the Model UN circuit for close to eight years and have chaired, organized or delegated at somewhere north of 80 conferences I say that not to establish authority for its own sake, but so that you know what I look for when I chair. I care about substance. I care about delegates who show up having actually read the OST, not just skimmed a Wikipedia summary. I care about transparency and an active radical effort to improve as the sessions progress. I care about creative diplomacy that acknowledges real constraints UNOLA is not a real body yet. It is a committee we have designed to sit at the intersection of everything that is currently unresolved about how humanity returns to the Moon. The Artemis Accords have 70 signatories as of this month. China and Russia are building the ILRS as a parallel framework. India put a lander on the south pole. Christina Koch became the first woman to fly around the Moon three months ago on Artemis II. Artemis IV is supposed to put crew on the lunar south pole in 2028. The legal framework we are still working with was written in 1967, and the treaty that tried to update it in 1979 was never ratified by anyone with credibility. There is real, unresolved policy space here, and it is the job of this committee to occupy it. This background guide has been closely advised by industry professionals and former space administrators, use it well!

This is a General Assembly committee with crisis elements. You will draft resolutions. You will also, at points I choose, need to respond to developments that were not on the docket. Come prepared for both.

“The Executive board calls for delegates to submit a position at the beginning of the first committee session, these will be marked but they are NOT mandatory. The Executive board holds the right to revise rules of procedure given the specialized nature of this committee.”

See you in Hyderabad.

Clear Skies,

Committee Overview: What UNOLA is

Mandate

The United Nations Office for Lunar Affairs is a General Assembly committee constituted to address the governance vacuum surrounding humanity's return to the lunar surface. UNOLA holds authority to draft, debate, and pass resolutions on matters of lunar policy, but does not itself enforce any provision. Enforcement remains the domain of member states, existing UN bodies (COPUOS, the Security Council where applicable), and the private and commercial entities operating on and around the Moon. The committee's scope covers the four sub-topics outlined further in this guide. These are not sealed off from one another. A resolution on resource rights will inevitably touch security. A debate on equitable access will inevitably touch crew composition. Delegates should approach the agenda as one continuous problem with four entry points, not four separate problems that happen to share a room.

Powers of the Committee

• Draft and pass non-binding resolutions on any matter within the scope of lunar governance

• Recommend actions to COPUOS, the Security Council, and specialised agencies • Establish working groups, fact-finding missions, and rapporteurs

• Endorse or challenge existing frameworks including the Outer Space Treaty (1967), the Moon Agreement (1979), the Artemis Accords (2020), and the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) framework

• Propose new frameworks where existing ones are inadequate

What UNOLA cannot do

UNOLA cannot legislate for individual states. It cannot compel a private company to disclose proprietary information. It cannot override national law. Delegates who attempt to use the committee to bypass state sovereignty will find their proposals procedurally challenged, and rightly so. The point of this committee is to produce recommendations that member states might actually adopt, not to fantasise about a world government <3

Format and Expectations

This is a General Assembly committee with crisis elements. Most of committee time will be spent in moderated and unmoderated caucuses working toward resolutions. At the chair's discretion, crisis breaks will be introduced, requiring rapid drafting of directives, press releases, or emergency resolutions. Delegates should be prepared to shift between long-form negotiation and short-form crisis response

History and Political Context

The Space Race and its Legal Aftermath

The Cold War produced the first serious body of international space law. In October 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, and within four years Yuri Gagarin had orbited the Earth. The United States, having been publicly outrun, responded by pouring resources into what became the Apollo programme. On 20 July 1969 Neil Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface, and by December 1972 twelve men, all American and all men, had walked on the Moon. Then, for reasons that were as much about budget and politics as about science, we stopped going. It has been more than fifty years. The legal architecture for this period was built quickly. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 (OST), signed in the shadow of the space race, established the foundational principles that still govern space activity today. Its most consequential provisions are Article I, which declares that the exploration and use of outer

space shall be carried out for the benefit and interests of all countries, and Article II, which prohibits any national appropriation of the Moon or other celestial bodies by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means. Article II is the pivot around which every modern lunar resource dispute turns, because it is not clear whether extracting and using resources counts as appropriation. In 1979 the Moon Agreement attempted to answer that question by declaring lunar resources the common heritage of mankind and requiring an international regime to govern their exploitation. It has 17 parties. None of them are the United States, Russia, or China. In practice, the Moon Agreement is dead letter law. It is cited in academic papers and ignored by the actors who matter.

The Commercial Space Era

For the first three decades after Apollo, spaceflight was almost exclusively a state enterprise. That changed in the 2000s. SpaceX was founded in 2002, and by 2020 was flying crewed missions to the ISS on behalf of NASA. Blue Origin, Rocket Lab, Astrobotic, Intuitive Machines, and dozens of other private firms have followed. The 2015 US Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act declared that American citizens have property rights over space resources they extract, a position that critics argue directly contradicts Article II of the OST. Luxembourg passed a similar law in 2017. The UAE and Japan have followed. The commercial shift matters because it changes who has to be at the table. A resolution written for state actors alone will not touch SpaceX. And SpaceX is currently building the vehicle that NASA is contracting to land Artemis III's crew.

Artemis and the ILRS

In October 2020, NASA and the US State Department launched the Artemis Accords with eight founding signatories: Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the UAE, the UK, and the US. The Accords are a set of non-binding principles designed to guide lunar activity, and they include a controversial provision on safety zones, which permit signatories to designate areas around their operations where other actors must not interfere without consultation. Critics inside and outside the signatory bloc argue that safety zones are appropriation by another name. Supporters argue they are a practical necessity for avoiding accidents on a crowded lunar surface. As of July 2026, 70 nations have signed the Artemis Accords. Mauritius became the 70th on 17 July. The list spans every populated continent and includes major powers (US, UK, France, Germany, Japan, India, South Korea), commercial hubs

(Luxembourg, UAE, Singapore), and a growing bench of developing nations (Nigeria, Rwanda, Angola, Bangladesh). The most consequential absences are Russia and China. Both have declined to sign, with Russia publicly calling the Accords an attempt to write international space law in Washington's favour. Instead, Russia and China lead the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) framework, an alternative coalition working toward a permanent crewed lunar base by the 2030s. ILRS partners include Venezuela, Belarus, Pakistan, and a growing number of states in Africa and Southeast Asia. Notably, some nations (Thailand, Senegal, Serbia) participate in both frameworks. The Artemis Accords contain no clause forbidding this, but the political optics of dual participation are becoming a live diplomatic question.

Where We Are Now

Artemis II launched on 1 April 2026, carrying NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, and CSA astronaut Jeremy Hansen on a ten-day lunar flyby. Christina Koch became the first woman to fly around the Moon. Artemis III is now scheduled for 2027 as an Earth-orbit rendezvous test with commercial landers, and Artemis IV is planned for 2028 as the first crewed lunar south pole landing since Apollo 17. In parallel, China's Chang'e-6 returned samples from the lunar far side in 2024, a first for any nation. India's Chandrayaan-3 successfully landed near the south pole in 2023. Japan and the UAE have lander missions in development. Commercial actors have already put payloads on the surface, some successfully and some not. The pace is accelerating and the framework has not kept up. This committee exists in that gap.

Timeline of Lunar Governance

4 October 1957 USSR launches Sputnik 1. Space Race begins.

12 April 1961 Yuri Gagarin becomes the first human in space aboard Vostok 1.

25 May 1961 President Kennedy commits the United States to landing a person on the Moon by the end of the decade.

10 October 1967 The Outer Space Treaty enters into force. Article II prohibits national appropriation of celestial bodies.

20 July 1969 Apollo 11 lands. Neil Armstrong walks on the Moon.

11 December 1972 Apollo 17 lifts off. Twelve astronauts, all men, have walked on the Moon. No human returns to the surface for the next 55 years.

11 July 1984 The Moon Agreement enters into force with a limited number of parties. None of the major spacefaring powers sign.

25 November 2015 The US Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act grants American citizens property rights over space resources they extract.

28 July 2017 Luxembourg becomes the second country to pass national legislation on space resources.

13 October 2020 The Artemis Accords are signed by eight founding nations.

9 June 2021 Russia and China formally announce the ILRS framework.

23 August 2023 India's Chandrayaan-3 lands near the lunar south pole. India becomes the fourth nation to soft-land on the Moon and the first to reach the south pole.

3 June 2024 China's Chang'e-6 returns the first samples ever collected from the lunar far side.

1 April 2026 Artemis II launches. Christina Koch becomes the first woman to fly around the Moon.

17 July 2026 Mauritius becomes the 70th Artemis Accords signatory.

2027 (planned) Artemis III Earth-orbit rendezvous test with commercial landers.

2028 (planned) Artemis IV: first crewed lunar south pole landing.

Key Points

• The Outer Space Treaty (1967) is still the foundational instrument of space law. It has 115 parties. Its Article II non-appropriation provision is at the centre of every modern lunar

resource dispute.

• The Moon Agreement (1979) attempted to establish lunar resources as the common heritage of mankind. It failed politically. No major spacefaring power has ratified it.

• The Artemis Accords (2020) are non-binding principles led by the United States and NASA. As of July 2026 there are 70 signatories including 20 initial and many recent African, Asian, and Latin American additions.

• The International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) is the China-Russia led alternative framework. It has fewer signatories but includes states that Artemis has struggled to attract.

• Some nations (Thailand, Senegal, Serbia) participate in both frameworks simultaneously. Neither framework formally prohibits this. The diplomatic implications are contested.

• The Artemis Accords include a provision on "safety zones" that permits signatories to designate areas around lunar operations where consultation is required before interference. Critics inside and outside the signatory bloc argue this is de facto appropriation.

• The lunar south pole is the target of essentially every serious current mission. It hosts water ice deposits in permanently shadowed craters, is a candidate for long-duration bases, and is spatially limited. Multiple nations and companies are converging on overlapping landing zones.

• Only twelve humans have ever walked on the Moon. All were American men on Apollo missions between 1969 and 1972. Christina Koch became the first woman to fly around the Moon on Artemis II in April 2026, but no woman has yet landed. Artemis IV in 2028 is planned to change that.

• The commercial sector is now indispensable to lunar activity. SpaceX's Starship HLS and Blue Origin's Blue Moon are the vehicles NASA is contracting for Artemis III and IV. Regulatory frameworks built for state actors alone will not adequately govern this environment.

• The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) is the primary existing UN body on space matters. It has 102 member states. It works by consensus, which has become increasingly difficult.

Key Terms

Outer Space Treaty (OST): The 1967 treaty that established the foundational principles of space law, including non-appropriation of celestial bodies and peaceful use.

Moon Agreement: The 1979 treaty that attempted to establish lunar resources as common heritage of mankind. Ratified by only a small number of non-spacefaring states.

COPUOS: The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the primary UN forum for space matters.

Artemis Accords: A US-led non-binding framework of principles for lunar activity, established in 2020.

ILRS: The International Lunar Research Station framework led by China and Russia as an alternative to Artemis.

Safety Zone: An area around a lunar operation within which other actors must consult before entering or interfering. Established under Section 11 of the Artemis Accords.

Cislunar Space: The region of space between Earth and the Moon, including lunar orbit.

Gateway: The planned crewed lunar orbital station being developed by NASA with partners. Component of the Artemis architecture.

Common Heritage of Mankind (CHM): A legal principle asserting that certain resources belong to humanity as a whole and cannot be appropriated by any single actor.

Central to the Moon Agreement. Planetary Protection: Protocols to prevent biological contamination of celestial bodies (forward contamination) and of Earth (back contamination). Governed by COSPAR guidelines.

Permanently Shadowed Region (PSR): Craters at the lunar poles that never receive direct sunlight and are believed to contain preserved water ice deposits.

ITAR: The International Traffic in Arms Regulations, a US regulatory framework that restricts transfer of certain space-relevant technology. A major barrier to international space collaboration.

Dual-Use Technology: Technology with both civilian and military applications. Nearly all space technology falls into this category.

Kessler Syndrome: A scenario in which orbital debris density becomes self-sustaining, with collisions producing more debris in a cascading feedback loop.

ECLSS: Environmental Control and Life Support Systems, the equipment that keeps crews alive on spacecraft and habitats

Sub Topic 1 - Resource Rights and Lunar Mining Disputes

The single most contentious question in lunar policy right now is whether Article II of the Outer Space Treaty prohibits resource extraction. Article II says that outer space, including the Moon, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means. Those last five words carry the whole argument. If mining lunar water ice constitutes appropriation "by means of use," then extractive activity as currently practised is illegal under the OST. If it does not, then the OST is silent on the matter, and states are free to legislate on their own. Both readings have supporters. The United States, Luxembourg, and Japan have all passed national laws granting their citizens or companies property rights over extracted resources, on the theory that Article II prohibits sovereignty claims over territory but does not touch resources removed from that territory. Their analogy is to fishing in international waters: no state owns the ocean, but a fisher owns the fish. Critics respond that this analogy breaks down because lunar water ice is not renewable on human timescales, and because the OST's drafters plainly intended to prevent exactly the sort of first-come-first-served extraction that current national laws enable.

Safety Zones

Section 11 of the Artemis Accords introduces the concept of safety zones: areas around a signatory's lunar operations within which consultation is required before other actors interfere. The stated intent is to prevent accidental collisions or interference between operators. The concern is that safety zones function as de facto exclusion zones, letting a signatory claim operational control over a region without formally claiming sovereignty over

it. The problem becomes acute at the lunar south pole, where usable landing sites and permanently shadowed regions with water ice are geographically limited. Multiple nations and multiple companies are converging on overlapping target areas. A safety zone declared by one operator around a peak of eternal light, for example, could effectively lock other operators out of the site. There is no established mechanism for adjudicating overlapping claims, and no international registry of declared safety zones.

Recent Developments

• The 2015 US Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act and Luxembourg's 2017 space resources law remain the most cited examples of national extractive legislation.

• India, having landed Chandrayaan-3 near the south pole in 2023 and joined the Artemis Accords the same year, is developing its own position on resource rights.

• China's Chang'e-6 returned samples from the far side in 2024, demonstrating capability for future extraction missions.

• Private actors including ispace, Astrobotic, and Intuitive Machines have all attempted commercial lunar landings, with mixed success. The legal status of any resource they extract is not settled.

Questions to Consider

• Does Article II of the OST prohibit resource extraction, and if so, how should this be enforced?

• Should safety zones be formalised, restricted, or abolished? Who registers them, and who arbitrates conflicts?

• Should the international community establish a common royalty or benefit-sharing scheme for lunar resources, or leave them to national legislation?

• How should the interests of non-spacefaring nations be represented in a resource regime designed by spacefaring ones?

• What is the status of resources extracted by private commercial actors, and to which state's legal regime are they answerable?

Subtopic 2 - Orbital & Surface Security

Cislunar space, meaning the volume between Earth and the Moon and including all lunar orbits, is filling up. In the 1970s there were a handful of objects in lunar orbit at any given time. As of 2026 there are over thirty active spacecraft in lunar or cislunar operation, and the projected number for 2030 is well over a hundred. The Gateway station, planned for lunar orbit under the Artemis architecture, will add a crewed presence with all the associated traffic (crew rotations, resupply, EVA activity). None of this operates under a coordinated traffic management framework.

Debris & Traffic

Low Earth Orbit already has a debris problem that experts have been warning about for decades. The Kessler syndrome, in which debris density becomes self-sustaining as collisions produce more debris, is no longer hypothetical. Multiple close-call events involving Starlink satellites and Chinese space station modules have occurred in the past three years. Cislunar space is currently far cleaner, but there is no reason to believe it will stay that way without deliberate governance. Historic upper stages, defunct probes, and impact ejecta from crashed landers all contribute to the population, and unlike LEO debris, cislunar debris cannot be deorbited by atmospheric drag.

Dual-Use Technology

Almost every piece of lunar hardware has both civilian and military applications. A rover designed to survey resources can also serve as a reconnaissance platform. A communications relay serving science payloads can also route encrypted defence traffic. A propulsion system optimised for cargo delivery can, with modifications, deliver something else. This is not a hypothetical: several existing space assets are officially civilian but operationally supporting military functions. The international framework for regulating dual-use space technology is fragmented, dominated by national export control regimes (ITAR in the US case), and largely inadequate to lunar-scale activity.

ASAT and Weaponisation

Anti-satellite weapons tests by India (2019), Russia (2021), the United States, and China have all produced international debris and diplomatic backlash. There has been no ASAT-type test

conducted in cislunar space, but the concept is not exotic, and the barriers are political rather than technical. The Outer Space Treaty prohibits the placement of weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies. It does not prohibit conventional weapons, and it does not clearly cover cislunar space at all, which was not a meaningful operating environment when the treaty was drafted.

Communications & Spectrum

Lunar surface and cislunar communications require radio spectrum, which is allocated internationally by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Current allocations are Earth-focused and were not designed for the density of lunar activity now anticipated. Overlapping communications from multiple national programmes have already produced coordination issues. NASA and ESA are developing a proposed "LunaNet" architecture. China is developing its own relay infrastructure. There is currently no international standard for lunar surface communications, and hardware from different national programmes is generally not interoperable.

Questions to Consider

• What body should hold responsibility for cislunar space traffic management, and how should it be constituted?

• Should debris in cislunar space be regulated under the existing Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, or does it require a new framework?

• How should the international community handle dual-use lunar technology, given that nearly all lunar technology is dual-use?

• Should the OST prohibition on weapons of mass destruction on celestial bodies be extended to conventional weapons, and to cislunar space?

• What is the appropriate standard for interoperable lunar surface communications, and who sets it?

Subtopic 3 - Crew Health, Selection and Enviromental Safety

This sub-topic covers the occupational health and safety questions surrounding human presence on the lunar surface for durations far exceeding anything Apollo attempted. The Artemis architecture envisions crews on the surface for weeks initially and eventually months. A permanent or semi-permanent base is planned within the next fifteen years. The medical, biological, and environmental questions this raises are largely unsolved

Radiation Exposure

The Moon has no meaningful atmosphere and no global magnetic field. Radiation exposure on the lunar surface is roughly 200 times that of Earth. It comes in two forms: galactic cosmic rays (a chronic background) and solar particle events (acute spikes during solar storms). Both are known to increase lifetime cancer risk, and both are of particular concern for reproductive-age crew. NASA's occupational radiation exposure limits were revised in 2022 to apply a single career dose limit of 600 mSv effective dose across all astronauts, replacing the previous scheme in which women had lower career dose limits (which had the effect of shortening the potential careers of female astronauts even where their overall mission performance was equal). The 2022 revision was informed by updated dosimetry and epidemiological data, and represented a significant shift in how sex-based risk modelling is applied to selection.

Astronaut Selection

Astronaut selection for long-duration missions is a genuinely open technical and policy question, and one that carries direct implications for who gets to represent humanity in space. The Apollo-era selection framework prioritised military test pilots. That framework is now outdated. Contemporary selection considers a much broader range of factors:

• Resource efficiency. Life support systems consume mass proportional to crew size and physiology. A smaller crew member consumes less oxygen, less water, less food, and produces less waste. For a given mission architecture, this can translate into meaningful launch mass savings. Female astronauts on average have lower resting metabolic rates and smaller body mass, and multiple aerospace engineering studies have shown that allfemale or majority-female crews reduce consumables requirements for long-duration missions.

• Radiation biology. Research on sex differences in radiation response is ongoing and complicated. Historical data from atomic bomb survivors and radiation therapy patients suggests women have slightly higher lifetime risk of certain radiation-induced cancers. Newer research, particularly from

NASA's Twin Study and ISS long-duration missions, has produced a more mixed picture, and the 2022 dose limit revision reflected the current consensus that historical sex-based dose ceilings were overly conservative. UNOLA | SMISMUN 2026 | Page 16

• Psychological and team dynamics. Studies of Antarctic overwinter crews, HERA analogue missions, and long-duration ISS missions have consistently found that mixedgender crews outperform single-gender crews on measures of conflict resolution, task allocation, and morale. Isolated all-male crews in analogue studies have shown higher rates of interpersonal conflict.

• Physical capability. Traditional selection heavily weighted upper-body strength and cardiovascular metrics that reflected the demands of Apollo-era EVA and vehicle handling. Contemporary lunar EVA suits, robotics-assisted tasks, and updated vehicle controls have shifted the physical demand profile substantially.

• Historical representation. Zero women have walked on the Moon. Christina Koch's flight on Artemis II in April 2026 made her the first woman to fly around the Moon, and Artemis IV in 2028 is planned to include the first woman on the lunar surface. This is a matter of both equity and of the international legitimacy of the current lunar programme.

The selection question is not narrowly technical. It is a question of what a lunar crew is for. If the priority is representing humanity in a landmark moment, representation matters directly. If the priority is minimising mission risk and cost, the evidence-based case for diverse crew composition (including but not limited to gender) is now well-supported in the literature.

Planetary Protection & Contamination

Human and robotic activity on the lunar surface introduces contamination in both directions. Forward contamination (Earth biology carried to the Moon) risks compromising future scientific investigation, particularly the study of any preserved water ice or organics. Back contamination (lunar material returned to Earth) risks are considered low but not zero, and the protocols for handling returned samples remain contested. The COSPAR planetary protection guidelines classify the Moon as Category II, requiring documentation but not sterilisation. Some scientists argue this is inadequate given the anticipated scale of human presence.

Life Support & Long Duration Habitation

Extended stays on the lunar surface require closed-loop life support at scales not yet demonstrated. The ISS's ECLSS achieves roughly 90% water recovery and partial oxygen recovery, but relies on regular resupply from Earth. A lunar surface habitat cannot rely on frequent resupply, particularly if the habitat is at the south pole and outside the operational range of most launch profiles. In-situ resource utilisation (ISRU) from lunar water ice is planned to close the resource loop, but ISRU at production scale has not been demonstrated.

Questions to Consider

• Should international standards for astronaut selection be established, and if so, what factors should they weight?

• How should radiation exposure limits be harmonised across national programmes, and how should reproductive-health considerations be handled?

• Should the Moon be reclassified under COSPAR planetary protection guidelines given anticipated human presence, and who bears the cost of enforcement?

• What emergency medical evacuation protocols should apply to lunar crews, and which national systems bear responsibility?

• Should there be an international registry of crew health incidents, and how should medical data privacy interact with mission safety?

Subtopic 4 - Equitable Access and Benefit-Sharing

Article I of the Outer Space Treaty declares that the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development. In practice, the benefits of lunar activity have accrued almost entirely to a small number of wealthy spacefaring nations and their commercial partners. The gap between the treaty's aspiration and the current reality is the substance of this sub-topic.

The Position of Non-Spacefaring States

Approximately three-quarters of UN member states have no independent launch capability. Many of these states signed the OST decades ago on the understanding that outer space would be a shared inheritance. They now face a lunar governance environment in which the terms of access are

being written by others, and in which the resources are being extracted by others. Their concerns have been repeatedly voiced through COPUOS, and largely deflected. The Artemis Accords have made inroads with a number of these states. Nigeria, Rwanda, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Mauritius and others have signed on. Whether accession represents genuine buy-in or a hedge against exclusion is debated. Some non-spacefaring signatories have publicly stated they signed to secure a seat at the table, not out of endorsement of every provision.

Technology Transfer

The US International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and similar frameworks in other spacefaring states place substantial restrictions on the transfer of space-relevant technology. These restrictions were originally designed to prevent proliferation of missile technology, but have the practical effect of preventing many collaborative technical partnerships. Efforts to reform ITAR to enable more open scientific cooperation have moved slowly. India's relationship with the US space sector, historically constrained by export controls, has been substantially opened since 2023, and offers a case study in what selective reform can achieve.

Capacity Building

The Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) has run programmes to build space capacity in developing states for decades, with meaningful but limited results. Newer initiatives include the African Space Agency (established 2023, headquartered in Cairo), regional cubesat programmes across Latin America and Southeast Asia, and various university-industry partnerships. The scale of these efforts remains small relative to the scale of activity being conducted by spacefaring states, and the funding is precarious.

Benefit-Sharing Models

Several possible benefit-sharing frameworks have been proposed: A royalty regime, in which resource-extracting states or entities pay a share into an international fund administered for the benefit of non-participating states. Modelled loosely on the deep seabed regime under UNCLOS.

• A data-sharing regime, in which scientific findings and telemetry from lunar missions are made openly available, with a stronger disclosure obligation than currently exists under the Artemis Accords.

• A capacity-building levy, in which a share of lunar mission budgets is directed toward space capacity development in non-spacefaring states.

• A representation regime, in which non-spacefaring states hold governance seats in bodies overseeing lunar activity, without needing to have contributed hardware or capital.

Questions to Consider

• Which of the above benefit-sharing models, if any, should the international community pursue?

• Should there be a formal disclosure obligation for scientific findings from lunar missions? What information should be exempt (proprietary commercial data, securityrelevant data)?

• How should technology transfer restrictions be reformed to enable scientific collaboration while preserving legitimate security interests?

• What role should the African Space Agency, ASEAN space cooperation bodies, and other regional agencies play in lunar governance?

• How should the interests of future generations be represented in decisions being taken now about lunar resource use?

The Current Governance Landscape

As delegates convene at UNOLA, the lunar governance environment is genuinely unstable. The Outer Space Treaty is holding, but the questions it does not clearly answer have become the questions everyone is asking. The Moon Agreement is functionally irrelevant. The Artemis Accords have grown quickly but are not universal. The ILRS is real but smaller. Some states are hedging by joining both, others by joining neither. Bilateral tensions are running higher than they have been in the recent past. Multiple lunar landings by multiple actors are planned within the next four years, some of them targeting overlapping regions of the south pole. The private sector is moving faster than the regulatory framework, and the regulatory framework is having to catch up in real time. National space agencies, private companies, and international bodies are engaged in ongoing coordination discussions, some through formal channels and some through less formal ones. This committee is convening at a moment when the international community has recognised that the existing framework is insufficient, but has not yet agreed on what should replace or supplement it. That is the space in which

delegates will be operating. Delegates should be prepared for the possibility of developments during the committee session itself. Space activity is fast-moving and unpredictable. Positions taken on day one may need to be revisited on day two.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer

A strong resolution from this committee should address, at minimum, the following:

1. What is the legal status of extractive activity on the lunar surface under existing
2. international law, and what supplementary framework, if any, should apply?
3. Should safety zones be formalised, regulated, or restricted, and by what mechanism?
4. What body should hold operational responsibility for cislunar space traffic management?
5. How should the international community handle dual-use lunar technology?
6. What common standards, if any, should apply to astronaut selection, health monitoring,
7. and radiation exposure?
8. How should planetary protection guidelines evolve given anticipated human presence?
9. What concrete mechanisms will ensure that lunar activity serves the interests of all
10. states, including non-spacefaring states?
11. What is the relationship between this framework and existing bodies (COPUOS,
12. UNOOSA, the Artemis Accords, the ILRS)?

Position Paper Guidelines

All delegates have the option to submit a position paper prior to the start of committee. Papers should be between atleast 300 words per sub topic single-spaced, in a standard font. Papers must cover at minimum three of the four sub-topics.

A strong position paper does the following:

• States the country's current position on each sub-topic clearly and concisely, without unnecessary preamble.

• Cites at least one relevant piece of national policy, statement, or programme evidencing that position.

• Identifies the country's likely bloc partners and areas of expected disagreement.

• Proposes at least one substantive policy contribution the delegation intends to bring to the resolution.

• Cites sources in a standard format (footnotes or endnotes). Wikipedia is not a source.

Position papers are due at the beginning of the first committee session. Late submissions will still be reviewed on a case by case basis. The submission of the paper or its lack has no consequences on award eligibility.

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