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## U.S. Department *of* State

**IEFINGS – FOREIGN PRESS CENTERS**

# Artemis Accords – Enabling International Partnerships for Lunar Exploration

**FPC BRIEFING**

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### S U M M A R Y

- **BACKGROUND:** During the Apollo era, international participation in lunar missions were limited. Under the auspices of the current Artemis program, America plans to lead a robust global coalition to explore the Moon. Specifically, NASA will engage international partners via a series of bilateral agreements called the Artemis Accords which, in addition to describing the specific activity, will include a series of principles to ensure a safe, peaceful, and prosperous future in space for all of humanity to enjoy.

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**THE WASHINGTON FOREIGN PRESS CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**MODERATOR:** Okay, I think we are ready to get started. Good afternoon and welcome, everyone. My name is Doris Robinson and I am the moderator for today's Foreign Press Center briefing on the Artemis Accords. This briefing is on the record, and we will now mute all participants.

Our briefer today is [Mike Gold](#), who is the acting associate administrator for international and interagency relations for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA. He will begin with some opening remarks and after that we will open it for questions.

And with that, I will turn it over to Mr. Gold.

**MR GOLD:** Thank you so much. Appreciate everyone taking time out on a Friday to hear about space exploration. One of the things I've always found most compelling about space is how it forces us to come together, not as individuals or individual nations, but as a whole world. Space is so difficult to try and survive and thrive in that it really requires us to unite, and that's what we're trying to do today with what are called the Artemis Accords. So just to provide a brief background, and then I'll talk a little bit about the principles.

As many of you may be aware, there's something called the Intergovernmental Agreement, which is the legal framework that's been utilized for the International Space Station; it's worked very, very well. We hope to leverage it further for the Gateway, which will be an orbital outpost around the Moon. But as we look at the Artemis program, which is, by the way, the effort to put the first woman and the next man on the Moon by 2024, it differs substantially from the Apollo program not only in terms of diversity of the astronauts that we're looking at – Artemis, of course, being the sister of Apollo – but in the international nature of the program.

Previously, in Apollo there was very limited international participation, and that certainly isn't and won't be the case as we move forward to the Moon under Artemis. But given that we'll be looking at lunar surface applications and activities in cislunar space, which is just a fancy

way of saying the area around the Moon in between the Moon and Earth – we need a new legal framework to execute agreements, and that is what the Artemis Accords are. They're to be a series of bilateral agreements between the U.S. and partner nations to enact activities to explore the Moon and conduct science, and what's going to be a little bit different from previous international partnership agreements is that we're leaning forward relative to some principles that as we move forward to the Moon, we want to preserve and protect that environment and ensure that we have a safe and secure and transparent and prosperous future not only for NASA and all the partner nations, but for the entire world to enjoy.

So with that, I'll just say a few words about what the principles of the Artemis Accords will be. It begins with peaceful purposes, that international cooperation on Artemis is intended not only to bolster space exploration but to enhance peaceful relationships between nations. Therefore, at the very core of the Artemis Accords is the requirement that all activities be conducted for peaceful purposes per the tenets of the Outer Space Treaty. And this is something you'll hear me talk about time and time again, that the Artemis Accords are very much grounded in the Outer Space Treaty, reinforcing the principles of the Outer Space Treaty and implementing our obligations under the Outer Space Treaty.

Transparency is another key principle for responsible civil space exploration, and NASA has always taken care to publicly describe its policies and plans. Artemis Accords partner nations will be required to uphold this principle by publicly describing their own policies and plans in a transparent manner.

Interoperability of systems is another critical principle to ensure safe and robust space exploration. It's not only important for people to talk to each other, but also for systems and hardware and space suits to be able to communicate. Therefore, the Artemis Accords partners will be asked to utilize open international standards, develop new standards when necessary, and strive to support interoperability to the greatest extent practical to, again, create a safe, prosperous future in space.

Emergency assistance is a cornerstone of any responsible civil space program, and the Artemis Accords partners will be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the agreement on the rescue of the astronauts, and the NASA and the partner nation will commit to taking all reasonable steps possible to render assistance to astronauts in distress. And this is another example where interoperability is so important, that to the extent our systems are interoperable, rendering emergency assistance will be easier, more effective, and safer.

Registration of space objects. So here, registration is at the very core of creating a safe and sustainable environment in space to conduct public and private activities. Without proper registration there can't be coordination. We would have trouble avoiding harmful interference. And that's why the Artemis Accords reinforces the critical nature of the registration and urges any partner which isn't already a member of the Registration Convention to join as soon as possible.

Release of scientific data. NASA has always been committed to the timely, full, and open sharing of scientific data. Artemis Accords partners will agree to follow NASA's example, releasing their scientific data publicly to ensure that the entire world can benefit from the Artemis journey of exploration and discovery.

Protecting heritage. Just like we do here on Earth, it's important to protect historic sites, historic artifacts, and therefore, under the Artemis Accords agreements we'll be asking partner nations to commit to the protection of sites and artifacts with historic value, whether that be from human space flight or robotic missions. We want to protect that critical history.

Space resources. Simply put, the Artemis Accords reinforces that space resource activities should take place in full compliance with the Outer Space Treaty, specifically Article 2, 6, and 11, and simply puts forth what I hope is a widely held contention that you can extract and utilize resources under the auspices of Article 2 and other aspects of the Outer Space Treaty.

Deconfliction of activities. Under the Outer Space Treaty, we want to implement our obligations – and this is an example of that – where NASA and the partner nation will provide public information regarding the location and general nature of cooperation which will inform the scale and scope of any safety zones. A safety zone will just be an area where there would be notification and coordination between partner nations to respect such safety zones, will prevent harmful interference, implement Article 9 of the Outer Space Treaty, and reinforce the principle of due regard. So here, simply notifying publicly where a country or entity is operating, and then coordinating if there's any potential for harmful interference, as required by the Outer Space Treaty.

And then finally, orbital debris and spacecraft disposal. We've got a lot of challenges with orbital debris here on Earth, and I hope we can do better as we move forward into space, which is why the Artemis Accords will ask partner nations to agree to act in a manner that's consistent with the principles reflected in the space debris mitigation guidelines put forward by the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and we'll ask partner nations to agree to plan for the mitigation of orbital debris, including the safe, timely, and efficient passivation and disposal of spacecraft at the end of their mission.

So we hope that these are common core principles that everyone in the world can agree with, and we think if we act in such a manner it will be beneficial globally to, again, create a peaceful and prosperous, a secure and transparent future, not only for America and a partner on the Artemis Accords, but for all of us in space.

So with that, I'll stop there and I'm happy to take any questions.

**MODERATOR:** Great, thank you so much. So we will now open for questions. We ask that our journalists wait until I call on you. We will then unmute you so that you can ask your question. To ask a question, please click on the raised hand icon at the bottom of the participant list.

And then we will go ahead and take our first question. Let's see here. It looks like we have a question from Edward Keenan. Edward, go ahead, and please, for the briefer, state your name and your media outlet.

**QUESTION:** All right, so my name is Edward Keenan. I'm from the Toronto Star newspaper in Canada. And I know that the Canadian Space Agency is a partner in this, and I was wondering for Canadians if you could just talk a little bit about Canada's potential in the missions and the project.

**MR GOLD:** Of course. So I used to live in North Dakota, so I consider myself at least half Canadian, for what it's worth. Still getting feeling back in my fingers from those days.

**QUESTION:** (Laughter.)

**MR GOLD:** Canada, of course, has been a vital partner to the U.S. both in space and here on Earth. Obviously, the Canadian Space Agency and space industry has a terrific and singular expertise in robotics. We're already engaged in discussions with Canada about participation in the Gateway, which will be the orbital outpost that will go around the moon, and we very much hope that Canada can join us in the Artemis Accords agreements that will be for surface activities, again, or other activities in cislunar space.

We just recently got approval to actually engage in negotiations on Artemis Accords, so there haven't been any formal conversations as yet. But we're certainly eager to engage with Canada and look forward to having conversations with them to explore how we might work together on the moon and repeat the success that we've had in low-Earth orbit.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Next, let's go to Magda. I believe she's with Polish TV. Magda, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Good afternoon. Thank you very much for doing this meeting. I have a question regarding the project you are talking about. Will there be or there has been established already any in cooperation with Polish scientists – I am from Polish TV – or generally with European Union?

**MR GOLD:** So again, we just got approval to negotiate this, so we haven't engaged, again, in any formal discussions, but I appreciate the question. Let me say in particular when it comes to Poland, which we've been so excited to see countries like Poland develop space agencies. United Arab Emirates, Luxembourg, Australia – there's just been a proliferation of such interest in space and new agencies being created throughout the world.

The challenge that we've had with – again, what's called IGA, the intergovernmental agreement for the ISS – is it's very difficult to bring new nations into that legal framework. However, the Artemis Accords will allow us to have a much broader span and scale of international partnerships.

So while we haven't engaged yet with Poland – although I will say that NASA has had conversations going back and forth that could bear fruit – we are absolutely targeting and thinking of these new space agencies like Poland. And that's part of the great benefits of the Artemis Accords that it will allow us to, again, create much broader international coalitions than the past legal frameworks have. So I can't say there's anything specific yet, but we're eager to engage with Poland and any other nation that has an interest.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Our next question goes to Keisuke Katori. I believe he's with Asahi Shimbun.

**QUESTION:** Thank you so much for taking my questions. Can you hear me?

**MR GOLD:** Yes, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay, so my name is Keisuke Katori from the Asahi Shimbun, Japanese daily newspaper. And I just want to make sure that – have you already invited negotiations to this accord?

**MR GOLD:** Sorry, could you repeat? Did you say did we invite Japan to participate?

**QUESTION:** But the country – any country?

**MR GOLD:** Any countries, gotcha. Before I answer, can I ask you a question? What time is it in Japan right now?

**QUESTION:** Right now, I don't know, because I live in D.C. now.

**MR GOLD:** (Laughter.) Okay, good. Sorry, I'm just glad you're up at three in the morning.

**QUESTION:** So don't worry about the time difference.

**MR GOLD:** Yeah, I felt terrible for a moment there, so – no, appreciate the question.

We are, again, just at the beginning of this journey that we haven't reached out to all the countries or even beginning with the countries that we want to speak with. And again, to describe, the countries that we engage with will be those that have already expressed an interest or do soon express an interest in some sort of partnership that would fall under the auspices of the Artemis program, with the exception of the Gateway, which we're using the IGA for, so that's got its own special legal framework.

Let me say relative to Japan or any other nation, and maybe to address Japan now, certainly, as you may be aware, there has been public discussions of a pressurized rover with Japan, and then I believe Toyota is working with JAXA on the concept. So while no specific conversations yet, we're just at the beginning in terms of what countries we'll engage with and what the specifics would be.

Any project that is on the surface of the moon would certainly be a terrific opportunity for an Artemis Accords arrangement, and again, the U.S., Japan certainly, just like we talked about with Canada, have a wonderful, proud tradition of working together. And there have been terrific contributions from Kibo and Japan as part of those Gateway conversations. And let me just say I've had great affection for any nation that is so supportive of both space and my other personal love of baseball, so "Go Chiba Lotte Marines" is all I'll say to that. And I do appreciate the question.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, and just one more follow-up question. How does China, who are under the restriction of the – to Congress that —

**MR GOLD:** Yeah, the Wolf Amendment.

**QUESTION:** So you need – you need to authorize the Congress to work with China.

**MR GOLD:** So we will absolutely abide by U.S. law. And again, the Artemis Accords are intended to be bilateral agreements to execute partnerships with the countries that we otherwise would be executing partnerships with for the Artemis program. So again, if there is a project that we would be working with a country on, this is the legal framework that we would be leveraging.

If there's nations like China or any other nation that we may not immediately be working with, whether it's due to congressional rules or any other restriction, or just that there isn't an activity, we do still hope that the principles that are espoused in the Artemis Accords are adopted as norms of behavior, both by other nations and hopefully, in the future, multilateral discussions. And that way, the benefit can be enjoyed by everyone. So we're hopeful that it'll have a positive impact on countries that we may not immediately be working with and invite everyone to follow these responsible norms of behavior.

**QUESTION:** Thank you so much.

**MR GOLD:** Thank you.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Our next question goes to Alex. He is with the Turan News Agency, Azerbaijan.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Doris. I appreciate that. And this is Alex from Turan News Agency of Azerbaijan. Mike, it looks like the Artemis Accords already run into resistance in Russia. The country's space agencies had called them an invasion that would lead to another Iraq and Afghanistan. I wonder how do you encourage Russia and as well as other surrounding countries like Azerbaijan to be a part of the deal?

And additionally, Azerbaijan announced that it will express a recent protest to NASA for distortion of the country's map in its project. I wonder if you know anything about that, because the spokesperson of the foreign affairs minister said that they had, or they were going to send a letter to NASA. Do you have any response to that? Thank you very much.

**MR GOLD:** No, thank you, Alex. Let me take your – the first question. We were disappointed to see some of the reactions from Russia, particularly since we hadn't even spoken about what was in the Artemis Accords yet. So I hope that when our colleagues in Russia – and sorry, I didn't know if I was freezing or not there – we hope that when our colleagues in Russia see what we're trying to achieve with the Artemis Accords and how we're doing that, that they will support what we're trying to accomplish and join us in trying to establish norms of behavior that will create a peaceful and prosperous future for Russia, the U.S., and the whole world; that again, the Artemis Accords are based and grounded in the Outer Space Treaty, the Registration Convention, most if not all of which are multilateral treaties that Russia has supported for a long time. So we hope now that we're able to speak publicly about it, that we hope for Russian support moving ahead, and look forward to engaging with our colleagues in Russia relative to that discussion.

In regard to the map issue with Azerbaijan, I'm afraid I'm not familiar with that topic. However, I think you can work through our colleagues with Department of State to

either send a letter or ask a question, and we'd be happy to help in trying to redress whatever the issue is.

**QUESTION:** Thanks so much.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. We do have a question from Mr. Arul Louis. He is with the Indo-Asian News Service. He asks: "I would like to ask a question. Is India a participant or a likely participant in the Artemis program since it has been involved in lunar exploration?"

**MR GOLD:** Yeah. I talk about the new emerging space agencies, and I can't put India in that category anymore, because there's been so many terrific accomplishments already in such a short time, and with so little money, that it's been amazing to watch what ISRO has able – been able to do affordably, and the creativity and passion and success that we've seen out of ISRO and India has been incredibly impressive. And we work with India and ISRO in any number of ways here at NASA, and we do hope that there will be strong future partnerships under the Artemis Accords and numerous other programs moving ahead.

Again, we just received approval to engage negotiations, so we haven't selected countries to work with or not to work with. That hasn't happened as yet, but I am definitely generally optimistic that there is going to be a wide variety of opportunities, including under the Artemis Accords, for the U.S. to engage with India, and just want to congratulate the country on all of their terrific success.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Let's see who our next question – it looks like we have a question from Gabriela Perozo. Gabriela, can you ask your question and please let us know your media outlet?

**QUESTION:** Hi. I didn't raise my hand; so sorry. No, it's a confusion, so sorry.

**MODERATOR:** Okay. Thank you. Then we will go on to Tariq Malik.

**MR GOLD:** Hey, Tariq.

**QUESTION:** Hello, Mike. It's Tariq Malik with space.com. Thank you for doing this today.

**MR GOLD:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** I just had, I think, two short follow-ups to your comments earlier about the accords themselves. For the companies – or pardon me, the countries that you do reach those bilateral agreements with, and you're looking ahead to operations then on the lunar surface, I'm curious if there is a provision in these accords that would require them to adhere to all of these principles with countries that may not be joinees or signees in it in terms of things like the rescue clauses, the operational clauses, that sort of thing.

And then just as a follow-up, NASA – while this is rooted in the Outer Space Treaty, NASA has long had international partnerships with the International Space Station over the last 20 years, something like five different space agencies, 15 countries. I'm wondering how much of that process, in terms of data-sharing, science and whatnot, has been able to carry over into these accords themselves, if any. Thanks.

**MR GOLD:** Yeah. Great questions. In terms of who would abide by the principles of the accords, again, bilateral agreements to execute our activities – so if there's a joint activity for a lunar rover, or a lunar orbiter, the country and space agency that signs with us would then be expected to follow those principles. Again, these are traditional international partnerships. We're just including a series of principles that are part of them that are baked in already to many of our existing agreements, because so many of the nations – including the U.S. – already are a signatory to the Outer Space Treaty, the Registration Convention, the Rescue of Astronauts, et cetera. It would not bind a country that wasn't signing the Artemis Accords unless we had some other type of agreement with that nation.

But again, we do hope that we can lead by example, that these are our principles that we think will establish a safe, prosperous, secure, transparent future for all of us, and we hope that even if there are nations that aren't signatories, that they would reflect these norms and behavior that the Artemis Accords will establish a precedent for.

I'm a recovering attorney, as I think you might know, and I really believe in precedent. And I hope that positive precedent that the principles of the Artemis Accords set will be adopted even by those who wouldn't necessarily be a member of an Artemis Accords agreement. That being said – and this almost seeds into your second question – that so many of the spacefaring nations have been – all of the countries of the world have become members of the Outer Space Treaty, of the Registration Convention, and numerous other multilateral agreements. So even if a country did not execute the accords, they're still bound by many of the multilateral treaty agreements that the accords references and is grounded in.

Relative to the lessons learned from the IGA and international operations of the ISS, absolutely. That is the foundation that the experience of the Artemis Accords are built upon, and we try to leverage every bit of that as we develop the initial principles of the accords and will continue to try and implement those lessons learned as we conclude agreements with Artemis Accords and actually finalize texts. So that experience has been critical. I mean, it's just like technology; as we build these kinds of agreements, you need that experience to move forward and develop more complex and ambitious projects.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Our next question comes from Vlad. Vlad, can you go ahead and state your name and our outlet?

**QUESTION:** Yes. Thank you for doing this. Can you hear me?

**MR GOLD:** Yes, we can hear you, Vlad.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. My name is Vlad Pavlov. I am with Russian News Agency TASS. Mr. Gold, it was previously reported that Russia won't be in – a part of these accords, as the Department of Defense views Moscow as hostile actor in space. It was Reuters news agency, if I'm not mistaken, taking – citing sources in the U.S. administration. And I think

maybe that was one of the reasons Russia reacted the way it did. Could you please clarify that comment? Will Russia be considered as a partner, and will Moscow be able to join these accords?

**MR GOLD:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean, again, I think in many ways Russia already has, that Russia is a signatory to the Outer Space Treaty. It's been operating in space for a very long time, the Registration Convention, et cetera. I think it's unfortunate that there were a lot of media leaks that didn't properly describe what the Artemis Accords were, so I'm not surprised for some of those reactions. Frankly, if I was in their place, I might have reacted similarly given the information that was presented, and that's why I'm very hopeful that now that we've come out and have described what's in the accords, and that they're grounded in the Outer Space Treaty, that Russia will be able to take a hard look at this kind of thing.

Now, again, the accords are for partnerships implemented under the Artemis Program for surface activities, cislunar activities, et cetera. Russia is already talking to NASA and the U.S. about participation in Gateway. That is being done under the IGA, so we're leveraging the IGA for Gateway. The IGA, if you're familiar with it, again, it's a terrific document and one that's extremely important, and very valuable for operating a space station.

So whether that space station is in Earth orbit or in orbit around the moon, it's invaluable text agreements that's been hard-fought. Tariq asked the previous question about lessons learned; one of the lessons learned is that if you're going to have a space station, the IGA is a perfect vehicle to do so. And I only mention that because as we look at Russian cooperation on Artemis, I expect a great deal of it may center around the Gateway. And that's the only reason I say that that may be a precursor possibly to Artemis Accord's agreements, because Russia has already expressed interest in participating in the Gateway Program.

So, again, as a famous baseball player once said – and forgive me for quoting baseball – it's tough to make predictions, particularly about the future, but there's nothing in the accords that we would hope that Russia would object to, and we think there's a world of

possibilities, depending upon where the country wants to head. Although, again, I would expect that the initial conversations will accure around Gateway, and the legal framework for that is the IGA.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, very much.

**MR GOLD:** No, thank you. *Spasiba*.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. It looks like our next question – Miya Tanaka, did you have a question? I wasn't sure if your hand was raised. Miya, you can go ahead.

**MR GOLD:** I'm just excited there's someone in a restaurant. Like, I'm jealous.

**MODERATOR:** Okay, so we do have another question that one of the journalists wrote in. Mr. Dong Yu, with China Review News Agency, asked: "Is there any space exchanges in cooperation going on between the U.S. and China? You say NASA will abide by congressional law, but how do you see the prospective of doing something that would be good for both countries?"

**MR GOLD:** Yeah. So to be clear, there have been cooperative activities between NASA and China, and what's colloquially known as the Wolf Amendment in the United States isn't a prohibition on cooperation; it just states that there needs to be a proper security review and there has to be congressional notification. And those requirements have been met on a number of times, as a matter of fact, if memory serves – forgive me, I know I'm on the record, so I have to be careful because I can get this wrong, but there was – I know there was a lunar cooperation that we had done with China, I think relative to one of their landers. And forgive me, and I certainly don't mean to cause any offense, it's just been a very long day that I'm forgetting the specific cooperation. But it has occurred before under the auspices of the Wolf Amendment.

And again, like I said, you don't even, I think, have to be a member of an Artemis Accords partnership to respect and echo the principles that are in the Artemis Accords. As a matter of fact, as we talk about the topic of space resources, China, or at least the leading law professor from a Chinese university, played a very constructive role relative to the Hague International Space Resources Working Group, was very engaged. So perhaps there's a great deal of common ground when it comes to these principles. Certainly, as the administrator pointed out though, it was disconcerting to see some of the debris from the last Long March launch.

And again, this is a principle that we need to tackle to ensure that space launch is conducted in a safe fashion that doesn't certainly threaten life here on earth, but additionally as we move forward things like registration and transparency and notification. This gets into the safety zone concept, that we need to have notification, we have coordination, to make sure that we can all operate successfully and safely, and we hope that China and any other nation will be able to reflect those principles.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. It looks like we have time for two more questions, and it appears we have a follow-up from Alex with the Turan News Agency.

**QUESTION:** Thank you so much, Doris. My – can I push you a bit on Azerbaijan case again? It looks like – I know you have said you haven't received any official letter from Baku, but this is certainly something that's being discussed in Azerbaijan. I'm wondering if you could reconfirm NASA's position on the country's territory integrity, whether it is about mapping, or any other bilateral or international context, the context of the subject. Thanks so much.

**MR GOLD:** So Alex, I'm afraid I can't comment one way or the other. I'm just not familiar with the issue or understand really the question that's being posed. But again, I would encourage you to discuss with the Department of State the question, and if NASA can be helpful, the Department of State can certainly reach out to us. So I apologize. If I had any

background in maybe what you were asking about, I would try to respond, but I'm afraid I have to say no comment, since I'm not familiar with the topic that's being raised.

**QUESTION:** Sure, thank you.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. It doesn't appear we have any other questions in our queue right now, so I will check one more time. If anyone has a question, please hit the raised-hand icon, and we will be able to take your question. Let's see here. Okay, yes, it looks like Mr. Dong Yu has a follow-up question. Dong Yu, can you go ahead with your question? It looks like he's having a bit of technical difficulties, so – and he appears to be our last questioner.

So I think we will end here. I know our briefer has another meeting to get to, so I would like to thank Mr. Gold for taking the time to speak with us this afternoon, and I would like to thank our journalists for participating today. We hope to have our transcript soon and we will share it with all the media that participated today, and I want to thank everyone once again. And with that, our event is concluded. Thank you, all.

**MR GOLD:** Thank you, everyone. Stay safe. Keep shooting for the stars.