REMARKS OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
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Good afternoon! It is great to join you for the Global Aerospace Summit. Thank for inviting me back to this discussion for the second year in a row. Since I last spoke with you, the Federal Communications Commission has been ramping up our work to promote space-based innovation, and I am excited to talk about some major new initiatives we have launched over the past year. But I would like to start with a story about why this work matters.

It was just a few weeks ago that we all learned of the deadly wildfires in Hawaii. It is a place I know well, not because I hail from the Aloha State, but because years ago when I worked on Capitol Hill, my first boss was Senator Daniel Inouye. I spent more than a bit of time on the islands, and I can assure you it was not a hardship assignment. Hawaii is an astonishingly beautiful place with a landscape that is so often so lush. That is why it is impossible to imagine the kind of dry, wind-fueled flames that raced along the western edge of Maui. It is harder still to conceive that they were so powerful they leveled the historic town of Lahaina.

The stories coming out of Lahaina are harrowing. My thoughts, and I am sure yours too, are with those affected, those who lost homes and loved ones, and those who now need to rebuild. But the heroic stories matter too. Because it is important to understand how people assist one another in crisis. It is important to get a feel for what warnings worked and what systems helped save lives.

When the fires were raging, five young people aged 18 to 30 found themselves trapped in a white van near the outlet mall in Lahaina. The skies were smoky. It was not clear where to go or what to do, so they decided to drive toward the ocean. But the roads to the water were blocked, and poor visibility quickly deteriorated into no visibility. They were stuck in a sea of flames with nowhere to go. Terrestrial wireless services were knocked out so there was no way to call 911 for help. The van was hot and getting hotter. The situation seemed helpless.

But this crew of five young people survived. They are alive today thanks to new technology. Their phone had a new feature—the ability to connect directly to emergency personnel by bypassing ground-based communications and instead using satellite signals delivered from space. At 6:14 PM their message asking for help reached first responders along with their location. By 6:47 PM they sent a follow-up message to the dispatchers to say they had been rescued.

That's incredible. And when we talk about the benefits of space-based innovation, it is easy to just offer broad statements about the importance of United States leadership and the value of growing the more than half-a-trillion dollar space economy. At least, I know it is for me. But it is important to remember that if all of us—policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators—do this right, we are not just boosting a job-creating industry, we are unlocking advances that have the power to make us safer in crisis and stronger in day-to-day life. That is

how I try to think about space-based innovation and why I have made it a priority at the FCC like never before in our history.

That is a big statement. So let me back it up.

The FCC is the Nation's expert responsible for overseeing communications technology. Sitting at the top of the agency, every day I get to see how innovation is changing the way we connect, and how those connections fuel everything in modern civic and commercial life. Perhaps nowhere are these innovations growing as fast as they are in space.

For more than six decades, the FCC has worked to support commercial satellites. This space effort began back when President Kennedy was in office and Telstar 1 was launched to share live television images between Europe and the United States. But today space communications support broadcasting to broadband and so much more. This technology is responsible for some of the most vital connections on Earth. Plus, launches are no longer rare, constellations are no longer small, and satellites are no longer just bulky objects in our skies.

Consider the numbers. Right now we have applications for more than 56,000 satellites pending before the FCC. That is twice the number of applications we had just four years ago. On top of that, we are seeing new applications for novel space activities like lunar landers, space tugs that can deploy other satellites, and space antenna farms that can relay communications.

All this activity led me to make some changes. When I joined this gathering last year I shared that I planned to set up a Space Bureau at the FCC. There are now so many new technologies in the space industry, so many applications pending before the agency, and so many more innovations on the horizon that I said the agency can't keep doing things the old way and expect to thrive in the new.

Since making that announcement, I have learned a thing or two. Chief among them is that reorganizing a federal agency is not for the faint of heart. It requires Commission orders, reviews by the Office of Management and Budget, Congressional approvals, and union negotiations. It's a lot—and it takes time.

In fact, in the past, this kind of reorganization has taken more than a year. But good ideas have their own momentum, and we were able to officially launch the FCC's new Space Bureau and Office of International Affairs within five months of my announcement.

Today the Space Bureau is up and running. It is designed to support United States leadership in the space economy, promote long-term technical capacity to address satellite policies, and improve our coordination with other agencies on all of these issues.

Of course, an organization is only as strong as its leadership. With that in mind, it gives me great pleasure to report that the Space Bureau is being led by Julie Kearney. She is well-known in communications policy. She is an experienced coalition builder and a leader who speaks the language of innovation. She has already been reaching out to many of you to explore new avenues for collaboration, and I know the best is yet to come.

Julie and her team have hit the ground running.

To keep pace with the increase in both the complexity and number of applications for space services before the agency, next week, the Commission will vote on new rules to streamline our satellite policies. This streamlining effort is designed to expedite the processing of space and earth station applications. That, in turn, will promote competition and innovation by making it easier for new companies to enter the market.

I also have put before my colleagues a plan to provide long-term regulatory certainty by making sure all operators can access the spectrum they need for successful commercial space launches. That means more airwaves for vital links to launch vehicles. It also makes it simpler for new competitors to get reliable access to the spectrum they need. Launches are nail-biting undertakings under ideal conditions, so this will help make it easier.

At the same time, I am working with my colleagues to unlock the kind of space-based technology that supported the Maui fire rescue I mentioned at the start. This is so important. Because we are on the cusp of a much broader effort to bring together terrestrial wireless and satellite capabilities to accomplish what neither network can do on its own. That is why the FCC is developing a new regulatory framework to support direct satellite-to-smartphone communications. It is part of what we call the Single Network Future. Our approach is designed to make it easier for satellite operators to collaborate with wireless carriers to access their terrestrial spectrum and fill gaps in coverage from space to the phone in your pocket. So stay tuned.

Another area where the Commission is doing work is something that was featured this morning during the symposium. There was a panel to discuss in-space servicing, assembly, and manufacturing—or ISAM—capabilities. During the past year, the FCC has been actively exploring ways ISAM can help us repair and refuel satellites in space, assemble whole systems in orbit, or even build entire new industries that advance our scientific frontiers and national security. Our effort is focused on the communications necessary to enable these awe-inspiring capabilities. Again, stay tuned because we will follow up on the record we have developed on this subject.

We also remain committed to mitigating orbital debris so that the space economy can support our grandest ambitions. Last year we put in place rules that reduced by 80 percent the amount of time operators regulated by the FCC have to deorbit retired satellites. This is big because it helps reduce the risk of collisions that can cause space communications failures.

That is a tour through some of our newest initiatives coming out of the Space Bureau. As exciting as these details are, I think it is also good to lift our gaze and marvel at what space means to us. In other words, it is okay to have a little awe.

Six weeks ago, I had the honor of visiting the Kennedy Space Center. I met with Administrator Bill Nelson and scientists throughout the complex. The highlight of the trip was meeting the Artemis II crew who will soon become the first people to visit the moon in over half

a century—including, I should add, the first woman and the first person of color. I will confess the rush of this trip was unlike anything I had ever experienced.

Why did I feel that way? I think it's because space exploration reminds us of what is best in us. It reminds us that we are a Nation that pushes boundaries and purses discoveries. We do this, as President Kennedy so famously said this week in 1962, not because it is easy, but because it is hard. Because the skies inspire us to push the limits of human achievement, communicate in new ways, and understand our own planet like never before. In the United States we have done it before, and it's my honor to work with all of you to do it again.

Thank you.