

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson

Full Committee

“Live from the International Space Station”

December 2, 2015

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I look forward to this morning’s downlink and the chance to hear from our NASA astronauts today about life aboard the International Space Station and the challenges and opportunities they face.

As you know, last month we celebrated the 15th anniversary of continuously occupying the ISS. I want to again congratulate NASA and its partners on this significant accomplishment.

The ISS is playing a critical role in advancing scientific research, preparing for future human spaceflight initiatives, and inspiring the next generation. I wish more of our young people could see the wonderful exhibits in this room. I have no doubt that they would be inspired to develop their own science projects that might one day fly on the Station.

Mr. Chairman, realizing our dreams to send humans beyond low Earth orbit, and eventually to Mars and back, will depend greatly on the research we conduct on the ISS. As you know, Commander Scott Kelly is spending a year living and working aboard the ISS to help scientists better understand how the human body reacts and adapts to the harsh environment of space. This is but one example of the ways in which the ISS provides a unique environment for research. Yet, as we heard at the hearing the Space Subcommittee held a few months ago on operational challenges facing the ISS, keeping the ISS a productive orbiting facility is not easy.

The recent cargo resupply mission failures are stark reminders of the risks and challenges that NASA and its partners face in operating and maintaining the station. That is why we must never lose sight of why we are making our national investment in the ISS in the first place. We need to ensure that for however long we are able to operate it, we do so in a way that maximizes its productivity and its contribution to cutting-edge research.

The astronauts we will hear from in a few minutes are on the front lines of that endeavor, and I look forward to hearing from them.