



SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE  
15th meeting  
held on  
Tuesday, 27 October 1981  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 61: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE:

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/36/20);
- (b) REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/36/46)

AGENDA ITEM 62: PREPARATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE USE BY STATES OF ARTIFICIAL EARTH SATELLITES FOR DIRECT TELEVISION BROADCASTING: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/36/20)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, at the present meeting, the Special Political Committee was starting its consideration of two items relating to outer space-- agenda item 61, entitled "International co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space", under which it would consider the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/36/20) and the report of the Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/36/45), and agenda item 62, entitled "Preparation of an international convention on principles governing the use by States of artificial earth satellites for direct television broadcasting." In conformity with the practice adopted in earlier years, he suggested that the Committee should consider the two outer space items together, on the understanding that any delegation which wished to make separate statements on each item would be free to do so.

2. It was so agreed.

3. Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria), Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, introducing the report (A/36/20) on the twenty-fourth session of that Committee which was also acting as the Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, whose report appeared in document A/36/46, said that the Committee had made every effort to carry out to the fullest extent possible the mandates given to it by the General Assembly.

4. Turning first to the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, he said that once again priority had been given to questions relating to remote sensing of the earth by satellites. In the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee, discussions on that item had focused primarily on the problem of the classification of remotely sensed data, since the determination of a means of data classification was of crucial importance for resolving the more general problem of dissemination of data. However, Member States had not indicated any significant departure from previous basic positions, and further effort and willingness to compromise would be needed to reach agreement on that question. The Committee had endorsed the decision of the Sub-Committee to encourage the establishment of new, and the strengthening of existing, regional remote sensing

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(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

centres. In another area of its work, the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee had reviewed past and current activities of the programme on space applications, and had approved proposed activities for 1982. However, some delegations had expressed the view that it would be increasingly difficult in the future to provide significant service under the United Nations with the limited funds available to it. The budget for the programme on space applications for the biennium 1980-1981 had been cut by 30 per cent, instead of remaining stable in real terms. In that connexion, the Committee had called upon the Expert on Space Applications to submit a detailed proposal, along with its financial implications, for activities that could be undertaken within the Programme to further assist Member States in their efforts to share the benefits of applications of space technology for development.

5. In the field of technical assistance, the Committee had expressed its appreciation to Governments, organizations and specialized agencies which had offered fellowships and provided assistance in the organization of seminars and other training programmes held in the context of the United Nations programme on space applications.

6. The Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had presented a report which was reproduced as annex II to the report of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and contained three major conclusions. First, the Working Group had reaffirmed its finding that nuclear power sources could be safely used in outer space, provided that all necessary safety requirements were met. Secondly, the Working Group had determined that the original purpose of its establishment had now been fulfilled, and had recommended that its work should be suspended until such time as deliberations might again prove useful. At the same time, it had also been recommended that the question of the use of nuclear power sources should be retained as a priority item on the agenda of the Sub-Committee. Finally, the Working Group had encouraged Member States to continue their studies concerning the use of nuclear power sources in outer space.

7. The other items discussed by the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee had included space transportation systems, co-ordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system and examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit.

8. The Legal Sub-Committee had continued priority consideration of the legal implications of remote sensing of the earth from outer space, on the basis of draft principles which had been first examined in 1979. However, a number of issues remained to be agreed upon before the draft principles could be finalized. That item would therefore need further consideration by the Sub-Committee in 1982.

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9. Another priority item discussed by the Legal Sub-Committee had been the elaboration of draft principles governing the use by States of artificial earth satellites for direct television broadcasting. Unfortunately, the efforts in the Sub-Committee in 1981 had not met with the success of previous years. However, discussions on the question had continued, and the Committee had had before it an additional text proposed by 12 delegations. Hope remained that consensus was still within reach since, although the task was not an easy one, it was essential to fulfil the mandate which the General Assembly had entrusted to the Committee. Annexes II and III to the report of the Committee contained texts on which negotiations were continuing.

10. The Legal Sub-Committee had also considered the possibility of supplementing the norms of international law relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. While a most extensive exchange of views had taken place, no agreement had been reached on that matter. Finally the Legal Sub-Committee had also discussed matters relating to the definition and/or delimitation of outer space activities, bearing in mind questions relating to the geostationary orbit. Different views had been expressed regarding the particular status of the geostationary orbit. Some delegations had referred to the resolution adopted by the 1979 World Administrative Radio Conference on the planning of space services in the geostationary orbit, a resolution which stated that "attention should be given to relevant technical aspects concerning the special geographical situation of particular countries." In view of the diverse opinions expressed, the matter would have to be considered further.

11. The report of the Preparatory Committee for the UNISPACE 82 Conference (A/36/46) reflected work completed during the third session of that Committee in July 1981 and, in addition, work carried out by its Advisory Committee in February 1981. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 13/15, those two Committees had continued their consideration of the many essential elements which together would provide the framework for a successful convening of that important global conference. The remaining primary function of the Preparatory Committee would be to work out a draft for the final report of the Conference. He was pleased to report that preparations for the Conference were proceeding well and in accordance with the time-schedule originally envisioned.

12. The Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was a unique event involving all nations. The work of the Preparatory Committee had shown that space was no longer the province of a select few. With the growth of new space technologies and applications, countries throughout the world were being awakened to the benefits which now lay within their reach. The benefits of space science and technology could be made meaningful to mankind only if outer space were safeguarded as an exclusively peaceful environment removed from the frictions and tensions of day-to-day politics. In that connexion, great concern had been expressed by many Member States in the Committee concerning the threat of increased military

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activity in outer space. Many Member States in the Committee had expressed the hope that the United Nations as a whole should address that matter so that man's newest environment - outer space - would not become an area of conflict and tension, increasing rather than diminishing instability and insecurity on earth.

13. Space could be used to solve many economic, social and political problems. Its conquest was a challenge to all mankind, but it could be undertaken only in a new spirit of international co-operation, in a spirit that seemed to be sadly absent in many areas of present-day world politics.

14. Mr. YASH PAL (Secretary-General of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space), reporting on the progress of preparations for the Conference which were being carried out in the light of decisions already adopted by the General Assembly, said that one of the most important activities undertaken had been the preparation and distribution of a large number of background papers. That had been a unique venture in the United Nations, undertaken with the co-operation in particular, of the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR), the International Astronautical Federation (IAF) and more than 200 scientists from all over the world. He could say without hesitation that some of the material put together would be of lasting value and would greatly enhance the quality of the Conference.

15. Although the original deadline for national papers had been 15 June, the Preparatory Committee had recommended that he should continue to process the papers received until as late as possible and take them into account in preparing the draft final report of the Conference. So far, papers had been received from 56 countries and a few more were expected shortly. If some papers were received too late for the first draft, their main elements could be taken into account in the later drafts of the report. Most of the documents received had already been distributed to Member States in the language of submission, along with their abstracts in all of the Conference languages. For many countries, the preparation of those papers had provided an opportunity to review and assess their over-all and diverse space-related activities. Whenever requested, he had made special efforts to provide assistance in the preparation of national papers.

16. With regard to the draft report, the Preparatory Committee had provided him with an outline which basically followed the agenda of the Conference. The draft report would be based primarily on the reconciliation and analysis of various national papers and discussions in the Preparatory Committee and the Special Political Committee, and would also take into account a great deal of information provided by the background papers and specialized agencies. In order to take account of all the national papers received, it had been necessary to delay the final preparation of the draft report, which he expected to submit to the Advisory Committee in January and, in its revised version, to the Preparatory Committee at its meeting in March and April 1982.

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17. Several regional seminars had been organized in the context of the Conference and others were planned in the near future. At the seminars held at Addis Ababa, Buenos Aires and Toulouse, and at the training seminar held at Sofia, certain recommendations had been made which were summarized in document A/CONF.101/PC/L.14 and had proved quite useful in the preparation of the draft report. He hoped that Member States would send high-level representatives to the seminars to be held at Jakarta and in Ecuador and possibly Morocco.

18. The IAF Congress in Rome had also organized a special session on UNISPACE 82. The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics had featured the Conference in at least two of its meetings, one of which had been held in co-operation with the Aspen Institute of Humanities Studies. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology had organized a special session in connexion with its Sky Art Conference and the Conference had also been discussed at a recent meeting at Montreal. He himself had given talks on the subject to academies, education and research institutes and other groups. COSPAR and the Stanley Foundation would also be holding two meetings on the subject in 1982.

19. Whenever possible, he had taken part in some of the regional seminars and used those occasions to visit countries in the region and hold discussions with high government officials, senior officers involved in the preparation of national papers and others engaged in space activities. He planned to visit countries in Asia and participate in the regional seminar to be held at Jakarta the following month. So far, he had visited Latin America, Africa, Eastern and Western Europe, where he had found that a large number of space-related activities were being carried out and that there was a great deal of enthusiasm for the Conference. There were also some problems, however, which showed the need for more intense regional co-operation in that field. In practically every country, including many developing countries, there were viable nuclei and groups of people which should be nurtured, enlarged and provided with the necessary organizational framework for interaction. In many countries, the main obstacles were quite often not technological, nor even real problems but rather concerns about how to organize space activities in such a way that different agencies and government departments could co-operate in them. Such concerns were not confined to the developing countries, although proper realization of their space potential would of course make a bigger difference in those countries' future. He hoped that examples of the way in which those problems were being handled in different countries might be given at the Conference. He had requested various permanent missions to the United Nations to appoint specific liaison officers and had held regular meetings with such officers in New York. Such meetings would acquire added importance as the various stages in the preparation of the draft final report of the Conference were completed.

20. Although only \$US 50,000 had been allocated for the numerous public information activities recommended by the Preparatory Committee, the Conference Secretariat

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was doing all it could do to implement the Committee's recommendations within the stipulated financial ceiling. A bi-monthly newsletter was being published, a world-wide poster contest and an essay contest on the topic "How space activities could transform my country and the world" had been organized, the United Nations was planning to issue two space stamps and several countries had expressed their intention of issuing their own postage stamps to commemorate the Conference. Austria for its part was organizing an exhibition in Vienna in conjunction with the Conference, in which 22 countries and organizations had said that they would participate. Member States were requested to communicate directly with the host country if they wished to participate in the exhibition. A rotating exhibition would be on display in the General Assembly lobby from February to July 1982 and the Secretariat would be organizing in-conference demonstrations of various space applications without incurring any extra costs. He hoped that such demonstrations on the Conference site would emphasize human values and human impact, whether they concerned communication, education or message and data transfer. The Department of Conference Services was also planning to use space capabilities for several Conference activities such as the translation of Conference documents in New York using a link to the Conference via satellite.

21. A number of international organizations would be submitting papers and assisting in demonstrations and exhibitions. COSPAR and IAF were jointly organizing a symposium for non-governmental organizations in Vienna immediately prior to the Conference. That symposium would provide an opportunity to involve scientific and technological experts in the Conference and, in that connexion, he had recently written to Member States suggesting that they encourage experts from their countries to participate and that they consider including such experts in their delegations to the Conference. The International Astronomical Union (IAU) was planning a meeting at which a number of distinguished scientists from around the world would make presentations. He had established contacts with other organizations within the United Nations system such as the Centre for Science and Technology for Development and the Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development, as well as officials of the Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy. He had also attended an inter-agency meeting at which he had briefed representatives of the specialized agencies concerned on preparations for the Conference.

22. He had visited Austria, the host country for the Conference, on two occasions. The Commissioner-General of the Conference and his staff were working actively and the Government of Austria was fully involved in various aspects of the preparations. The Conference would be held in the Hofburg Palace where new facilities were being installed. The Austrian authorities were sparing no efforts to make the Conference a success.

23. Even though not a great deal of money was available, as many activities as possible would be undertaken. He did of course regret strict financial constraints

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on a conference of that magnitude. His work had been hampered by the fact that some of the senior officials of the Conference Secretariat had yet to be appointed. The preparatory process was proceeding satisfactorily, however, and with the concurrence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations he had drawn on the assistance of a number of senior consultants pending the appointment of those officials.

24. The first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Use of Outer Space, held in 1968, had brought forth the awareness that outer space had practical relevance for all countries and, in some aspects, particularly the developing countries. There was not evidence that that message had been taken quite seriously, also in the developing countries. For example, close to 70 ground stations for domestic satellite communication had been installed in Africa. Nearly all countries were using satellite meteorology and most had some experience with satellite remote sensing. Nevertheless, there was a general feeling that far greater use could be made of outer space and that the ground-based infrastructure should be adapted to the special needs of the countries concerned. At so important and critical a juncture, the Conference needed the enthusiastic participation of all countries.

25. Mr. WYZNER (Poland), speaking as Chairman of the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, said that the work of the Sub-Committee included the elaboration of treaties which, after adoption by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and later by the General Assembly, constituted the basic framework of the law of outer space.

26. In 1981, at its twentieth session, the Sub-Committee had continued, on a priority basis, its work on the formulation of draft principles relating to the remote sensing of earth from space, and also its work on the elaboration of draft principles governing the use by States of artificial earth satellites for direct television broadcasting. The Legal Sub-Committee had also considered the possibility of supplementing the norms of international law relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, and had continued its study of matters relating to the definition and/or delimitation of outer space and outer space activities, bearing in mind, among others, questions relating to the geostationary orbit.

27. In regard to the two priority items on its agenda--namely, the preparation of draft principles relating to the remote sensing of earth from space and the preparation of draft principles relating to direct television broadcasting--the Legal Sub-Committee and its working groups had made a very considerable effort to complete their work but had not been able to arrive at a total consensus on those questions. Accordingly, at the conclusion of the session, the Sub-Committee

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(Mr. Wyzner, Poland)

had recommended that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should consider whether the elaboration of draft principles on direct television broadcast satellites could be concluded or whether further progress could be achieved. At its 1981 session, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had established an informal Working Group to examine that purpose. The Working Group had considered what it had felt to be the essential outstanding issues--the draft preamble to the principles, the draft principle on purposes and objectives, the draft principle on State responsibility and the draft principle on consultation and agreements between States--but unfortunately it had been unable to complete its task. He trusted that the Committee would be able to do so in the near future.

28. In regard to the work of the Legal Sub-Committee on the preparation of draft principles relating to remote sensing, some important and difficult questions still remained: the definition of terms, notifications with respect to remote sensing programmes, the access of sensed States to remote sensing data, the dissemination of such data and the information derived from them, State responsibility for remote sensing activities, and the question of a reference in the draft principles to permanent sovereignty over natural resources and the settlement of disputes.

29. With regard to the question of the possibility of supplementing the norms of international law relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, he said that the Legal Sub-Committee had, in 1981, as requested by the General Assembly, established a Working Group to consider that important item. The Working Group had taken note of the fact that the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee's Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had reaffirmed its previous conclusion that nuclear power sources could be used in outer space provided that all necessary safety requirements were met. On the question of the adequacy of international law with reference to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, it was clear that opinions differed. He added that the Legal Sub-Committee's Working Group had concluded its discussions by expressing the view that its work provided a useful and constructive basis for the continuation of work on that item at the Sub-Committee's next session.

30. The Legal Sub-Committee had continued its work on matters relating to the definition and/or delimitation of outer space, bearing in mind questions relating to the geostationary orbit. However, there had been differences of opinion on the question whether a definition or delimitation of outer space ought to be established. The question of the geostationary orbit had also been the subject of close consideration and, there again, opinions had differed.

31. Some delegations had expressed their concern regarding the growing dangers of the military use of outer space and had stressed the need for the early consideration by the international community of measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. Every effort should be made to halt and reverse that dangerous trend and to prevent an arms race in outer space. In that connexion, reference had been made to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, and also to other United Nations treaties and resolutions.

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32. The twentieth session of the Legal Sub-Committee marked the completion of two decades which had seen not only achievements, but also disappointments. The achievements of the Sub-Committee, in particular the formulation of the five Outer Space Treaties, were impressive. He had no doubt that the Legal Sub-Committee would continue to meet its responsibilities in the formulation and development of the law of outer space.

33. Addressing the Committee as representative of Poland, he said that scientific and technological progress in the exploration of outer space during the previous twelve months, as reflected in the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/36/20), was remarkable. His delegation noted with pleasure that the Soviet Union had successfully completed in May 1981 its programme of manned, long-duration space flights aboard the orbital research complex SOYUZ-SALYUT 6. Poland had had the privilege of participating in one of the international space-crew missions and of carrying out valuable scientific experiments within the general framework of the Polish space programme. He congratulated the Soviet delegation on that achievement, and felicitated the United States delegation on the successful flight of the space shuttle Columbia. Poland was proud to be taking an active part in those efforts; and it contributed to them in accordance with its national programmes and within the framework of international co-operation. A sound base had been established in Poland for interdisciplinary research in the field of the peaceful exploration of outer space.

34. Poland was actively involved in numerous international space projects and in a broad international exchange of scientific information. It also took a keen interest in the activities pursued under the auspices of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two Sub-Committees.

35. The report of the Committee provided a telling indication of the heavy agenda of important matters which those bodies had to deal with. It also reflected the growing interest in those questions throughout the world. In view of the impressive record of achievement in space science and technology, it was becoming increasingly evident that simultaneous and parallel development of international co-operation in that area was an important prerequisite for ensuring access to the relevant benefits for all nations, particularly the developing countries.

36. He hoped that the paramount interest of all Members would ultimately prevail and that, as a result, the questions pending on the Committee's agenda would be successfully resolved in a not too distant future. Various new questions were also cropping up which would have to be dealt with and resolved, such as the question of delimiting and defining outer space, including the problem of the geostationary orbit, and questions related to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. In that connexion, the Polish delegation reiterated its support for the proposals to establish a clear-cut demarcation line between outer space and air space some 90-100 kilometres above sea level.

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(Mr. Wyzner, Poland)

37. Poland attached major importance to the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to be held in Vienna in August 1982, and was ready to co-operate in every respect to ensure its full success. The Committee on Space Research of the Polish Academy of Science had already prepared a paper outlining the leading programmes in research and application being executed in Poland. Plans had also been made for Poland's participation in the special exhibition to be arranged in conjunction with the Vienna Conference. It was Poland's deep conviction that the Conference would constitute an important milestone in the endeavours of the international community.

38. In conclusion, he expressed confidence that recent astounding accomplishments in the field of space science and technology would add new momentum to the efforts aimed at ensuring their exclusively peaceful use.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.