

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

THIRTY-NINTH SESSION

Official Records*



**COPY
FOR REFERENCE
ONLY - DO NOT
CIRCULATE**

OFFICIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
41st meeting
held on
Tuesday, 27 November 1984
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

DEC 15 1984

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIALLO (Guinea)

later: Mr. ABDULLATIF (Oman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued)
- (b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE: REPORT
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1984-1989

*This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC.2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/39/SR.41
29 November 1984

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued)
(A/39/20)
- (b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE: REPORT OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/515)

1. Mr. AKOLZIN (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that, since the USSR launched the first artificial earth satellite, in 1957, the great strides made in the exploration of outer space had furthered scientific knowledge and contributed to the development of many areas of the economy. The exploration and conquest of outer space were currently one of the primary goals of scientific and technological progress. Cosmonautics demonstrated the advantages of peaceful international co-operation in solving scientific and economic problems.

2. The international co-operation of the socialist countries under the INTERCOSMOS programme was expanding. In that connection, scientific teams in the Byelorussian SSR were active in a broad range of fields. An important feature of the INTERCOSMOS programme was the effort to promote the further progress of mankind, strengthen peace on earth and broaden co-operation between countries.

3. The Soviet Union had always consistently endeavoured to ensure that outer space was used exclusively for peaceful purposes and over the years had put forward a number of initiatives in that connection within the United Nations.

4. It had proposed the inclusion of an item entitled "Conclusion of a treaty on the prohibition of the use of force in outer space and from space against the Earth" in the agenda of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The conclusion of such a treaty would protect both States and outer space objects from attack. At the current session of the General Assembly, the Soviet Union had requested the inclusion of an additional item entitled "Use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes for the benefit of mankind" in order to reach agreement on the prohibition and elimination of all types of weapons in outer space. Such a solution would guarantee the security of all States and would ensure a peaceful future for all mankind.

5. All the efforts of the Soviet Union in that field, however, had met with fierce resistance from the United States and its NATO partners, who were opposed to the adoption of measures to prevent the militarization of outer space. In March 1983 President Reagan had publicly stated that the United States was beginning preparations for military operations in outer space. In January 1984 he had signed directive 119 laying the groundwork for the implementation of a large-scale strategic programme designed to create a potential for waging nuclear war in

/...

(Mr. Akolzin, Byelorussian SSR)

outer space and from outer space. Those and other military preparations showed the determination of the United States to extend the arms race to outer space. Urgent measures must be taken to ensure that outer space was used exclusively for peaceful purposes while that was still possible.

6. His delegation viewed favourably the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in the co-ordination and development of international co-operation with regard to the peaceful uses of outer space. It was hoped that the future work of COPUOS would serve to promote co-operation between States and further the cause of peace and mutual understanding.

7. Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria) said that the past year had witnessed further important achievements in the exploration and use of outer space. During that time a number of States had initiated national space programmes or had begun to participate in joint space ventures. Nevertheless, the intensive efforts to develop space technology must be accompanied by similar efforts to ensure a more equitable sharing of its benefits for the social and economic progress of all mankind. In that regard, it was regrettable that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had not been able to meet that challenge and that its role as a forum for scientific dialogue had declined.

8. During the first 20 years of its existence, COPUOS had proved to be an effective mechanism for the exchange of scientific and technical information and had been instrumental in the elaboration of a number of important international legal instruments. The General Assembly must reach agreement on the mandate of COPUOS in order to ensure the effectiveness of its work. Meaningful results could be achieved only if the interests of all States, including the major space Powers, were taken into account. His delegation urged all Member States to endeavour to overcome the lack of agreement concerning the future work of COPUOS. Only genuine dialogue and a mutual tolerance would enable it to regain the vigour of earlier years and to tackle the difficult issues on its agenda in a constructive manner. Other means of enhancing the effectiveness of COPUOS, particularly proposals designed to revitalize its role as a forum for scientific dialogue, should be explored. Furthermore, measures should be taken to improve co-ordination between the two Sub-Committees and between them and COPUOS itself.

9. A further effort must be made to follow up the results of UNISPACE 82 in order to prevent a loss of momentum in the implementation of its recommendations. His delegation was encouraged by the serious manner in which work had been conducted on the first three study projects proposed by the Conference. At its next session the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee should begin to identify subjects for a second series of studies. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications demonstrated the international community's commitment to co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space. Although significant results had been achieved in the past year with very limited means, much remained to be done and further contributions were necessary. His Government was continuing its scholarship training programme and had made a sizeable financial contribution to the Programme.

/...

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Austria)

10. The lack of progress in the Legal Sub-Committee concerning the legal implications of remote sensing of the earth from space was disappointing. A breakthrough in the deadlock could be achieved only if there was a stronger commitment on the part of all to reach agreement on generally acceptable draft principles. Austria welcomed the reconvening of the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space in the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee. In identifying areas for future study, the Working Group had laid the groundwork for further consideration of the technical aspects of that question.

11. The results of the work of the Legal Sub-Committee had been much less encouraging. In spite of a wide-ranging discussion of the issues related to nuclear power sources, no substantive progress had been made. In view of the increased use of outer space, that problem would become increasingly urgent in future years. Austria, therefore, felt that that item should be accorded equal status with the other items on the agenda of the Legal Sub-Committee.

12. The debate in the Working Group on matters related to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit had demonstrated the fundamental differences of opinion on those questions. He hoped that the General Assembly would be able to reach agreement on the future consideration of that item in order to facilitate a more substantive discussion.

13. The danger of the extension of the arms race into outer space was a matter of the most serious concern. The research and development programmes of the two super-Powers in the field of anti-satellite and anti-ballistic missile technology had led them to the threshold of an extremely dangerous and wasteful new stage in the arms race. In that regard, it was encouraging to note that the two super-Powers seemed ready to undertake negotiations on the subject of space weapons. It was hoped that those long overdue talks would progress quickly and constructively and would be accompanied by utmost restraint by both sides with regard to their activities in that field. The bilateral talks should be complemented soon thereafter by multilateral negotiations. An ad hoc committee established in the Conference on Disarmament would be the most appropriate forum for such negotiations.

14. The views expressed in COPUOS should be taken into account in those negotiations and, in particular, by the Governments directly concerned. Although COPUOS was not a suitable forum for arms control negotiations, it could eventually make a practical contribution to the prevention of an arms race in outer space by supporting negotiations carried out in other forums. Nevertheless, any involvement of COPUOS in the discussion of issues related to military security must not prejudice to its role in promoting co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

15. Mr. SOUMANO (Mali) said that mankind seemed to be struggling to avoid an imminent catastrophe, while its efforts at the international level seemed to be floundering in negotiations the outcome of which was uncertain. Yet the destructive power of nuclear weapons was increasing in both precision and speed.

/...

(Mr. Soumano, Mali)

Every effort must be made to ensure that the vast potential of space technology was used to serve economic and social development and to prevent the extension of the arms race to outer space.

16. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the progress made in the peaceful use of outer space and hoped that the countries, specialized agencies and other bodies concerned would persevere along those lines.

17. It also welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82). It agreed with the view expressed in the report of COPUOS (A/39/20) that remote sensing from outer space should be carried out with the widest possible international co-operation and participation and stressed the urgency of providing assistance to meet the needs of the developing countries. It also hoped that the Legal Sub-Committee would consider further the legal implications of remote sensing of the earth and matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit with a view to overcoming the difficulties encountered.

18. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should continue its consideration of space transport and the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. His delegation suggested that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/70, an ad hoc working group of the Conference on Disarmament should be established as soon as possible, with a view to undertaking negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement or agreements to prevent an arms race in space, on the basis of terms of reference acceptable to all those concerned. Consequently, it would be in favour of strengthening the Outer Space Affairs Division.

19. Since the maintenance of international peace and security was a primary objective of the United Nations, priority should be given to international co-operation on the peaceful use of outer space, for the good of all humanity and the benefit of all States, whatever their stage of economic or scientific development. His delegation hoped that it would be possible to avoid international rivalry in that field and invited the international community to make young people aware of that aspect of the survival of humanity.

20. It appealed to the nuclear Powers to make more effort towards mutual understanding, show their readiness to settle their disputes without recourse to force, and make a joint declaration announcing an immediate freeze on nuclear weapons and a complete halt to the production of fissionable material for military use.

21. Mali had always supported the principle of the peaceful use of outer space, which had many possibilities in the agricultural and geological sectors, could help to prevent natural catastrophes and could have a beneficial effect on transport, communications and education. It therefore considered that COPUOS should pursue its objectives unrelentingly.

/...

22. Mr. HUANG Jiahua (China) expressed regret at the extension and intensification of the super-Power arms race into outer space in recent years. General Assembly resolution 38/80, adopted by an overwhelming majority at the preceding session and requesting COPUOS to consider as a matter of priority, the questions relating to the militarization of outer space, reflected the grave concern of the international community at that dangerous trend. The reaction of the super-Powers had, however, been disappointing.

23. The possibilities for the use of outer space had arrived at a cross-roads, and the international community, and particularly the super-Powers, must decide whether it was to be a blessing or a catastrophe. The Chinese delegations to the Conference on Disarmament and to COPUOS had put forward specific proposals on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It believed that the exploration and exploitation of outer space should contribute to the economic, scientific, cultural and social development of all countries. It hoped that the super-Powers would hear the call of the peoples of the world and adopt immediate measures to halt the arms race in outer space, thereby contributing positively to its peaceful uses.

24. The achievements in space technology over the past year had been exciting. During that period, COPUOS had also made headway in promoting international co-operation and enhancing the level of space technology in the developing countries. However, with the rapid evolution in space technology, new legal problems would inevitably emerge. The existing space laws were far from adequate. His delegation earnestly hoped that agreement would soon be reached in the Legal Sub-Committee on the few intractable issues remaining with respect to the legal principles governing remote sensing by satellite. It was to be hoped that work would be stepped up on the definition of outer space and the utilization of the geostationary orbit, which had become urgent items, and on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Space laws must be made more comprehensive to reflect the latest development in space technology, regulate activities in outer space and promote international co-operation to ensure that it was used exclusively for peaceful purposes for the benefit of mankind. China would join the other peoples of the world in a joint effort to oppose any militarization of outer space and guarantee the healthy development of space activities.

25. Mr. SZELEI (Hungary) said that Hungary was proud of having been a long-term member of COPUOS, which had played an outstanding role in promoting the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and pursuing efforts to extend the benefits derived from that undertaking to all States.

26. His delegation welcomed the spectacular practical achievements made in the past year with respect to the use of space technology and research for the benefit of mankind. It congratulated the three Soviet cosmonauts who had set a new endurance record in orbiting the earth and also the Indian cosmonaut who had participated in a mission of SOYUZ T-11, which showed the benefit of international co-operation among nations.

27. Hungary's continuing participation in international co-operation in outer space within the framework of the INTERCOSMOS programme of socialist countries had

/...

(Mr. Szelei, Hungary)

proved fruitful. Its participation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space was based on the principle that it should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes for the benefit of mankind. It therefore fully shared the view that the militarization of outer space, if not countered in time, would consume enormous material and intellectual resources, as well as heightening international tension.

28. His delegation welcomed the constructive approach of the Soviet Union in sparing no effort to take practical steps to ensure that the exploration of outer space was carried out exclusively for peaceful purposes, for the benefit of mankind. It also welcomed the unilateral commitment of the USSR not to be the first to launch into outer space any kind of anti-satellite weapon so long as other States refrained from doing so.

29. In his delegation's opinion, COPUOS should be entrusted with the task of drafting an additional instrument to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty which would set forth the general principle prohibiting the use of force from outer space against the earth as well as from earth against objects in outer space. Another practical measure would be to declare a moratorium, as described in paragraph 21 of the report (A/39/20).

30. In general, his delegation endorsed the report of COPUOS. In particular, he agreed that the Legal Sub-Committee should intensify its efforts to complete the drafting of principles relating to the legal implications of remote sensing of the earth from space, and, therefore, he proposed that the General Assembly should ask the Sub-Committee to finalize the draft principles on that subject. However, his delegation regretted that little progress had been made in the particularly significant area of the definition and delimitation of outer space, and he urged the Sub-Committee to intensify its efforts in that regard. His delegation agreed that the Legal Sub-Committee's Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space should await the results of the corresponding Working Group of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee, but it opposed any attempt to change the title of that item as dealt with in the latter Sub-Committee.

31. Referring to the work of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and, in particular, to the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, he stressed that Hungary was committed to the fullest possible implementation of those recommendations and had, accordingly, submitted its views on that topic to the Secretary-General. The constructive results which the Sub-Committee had produced in the past should help to deter those who wished to change both its mandate and its form.

32. In conclusion, he noted that COPUOS was a valuable political, legal, scientific and technical body which deserved full support.

33. Mr. KOVACIC (Czechoslovakia) drew attention to the unconstructive attitude which a number of important delegations had displayed in 1983 towards the adoption of a resolution to eliminate weapons from outer space. Indeed, on the eve of the twenty-seventh session of COPUOS, the United States had tested an anti-satellite weapon, in an exercise which presupposed military operations in outer space.

/...

(Mr. Kovacic, Czechoslovakia)

Therefore, it was high time to elaborate international legal instruments not only to prevent the deployment of such weapons but also to ensure that technological achievements were used in outer space for peaceful purposes.

34. In addition to the successful Czechoslovak-Soviet space flight conducted six years previously, his country was participating in a number of joint space research projects. However, effective international co-operation in outer space must be free of highly dangerous militaristic policies, such as those reflected in the deployment of United States medium-range missiles in Western Europe, in projects for a space-based anti-satellite system and weapons and in efforts to achieve military superiority in outer space.

35. His delegation supported all proposals aimed at reversing such trends, for example the 1981 Soviet proposal for the conclusion of a treaty prohibiting the deployment of weapons of any kind in outer space and the 1983 Soviet proposal for the conclusion of a treaty prohibiting the use of force in outer space and from space against the earth. By the same token, he drew attention to the Soviet commitment not to be the first to send anti-satellite weapons of any kind into outer space and to the Soviet proposal submitted to the twenty-seventh session of COPUOS - India had submitted a similar proposal - in connection with a universal moratorium on the testing, deployment and use in outer space of weapons of any kind, pending the conclusion of the corresponding treaty. In addition, the Soviet Union had submitted a draft resolution on the question of the peaceful uses of outer space to the current session of the General Assembly.

36. His country regarded COPUOS as the most appropriate forum for negotiations on international legal instruments concerning the militarization of outer space and, therefore, supported the proposal that its Legal Sub-Committee should be given a mandate to deal with that matter. COPUOS had already proved its effectiveness, for example in the elaboration of five international treaties governing the activities of States in outer space, when it had, moreover, dealt with the question of militarization. Questions concerning the militarization of outer space were an important component of outer space activities and could not be removed from the COPUOS agenda merely by referring to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

37. In line with the great efforts made by the countries of the socialist community to ensure that outer space was used exclusively for peaceful purposes, the Czechoslovak delegation to the Conference on Disarmament had submitted, on behalf of those countries, a draft mandate for a committee which would thoroughly consider measures aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. However, such a committee had not been established because certain Western delegations, primarily that of the United States, had opposed the opening of detailed negotiations on appropriate measures. Indeed, their agreement to a general consideration of the problem merely disguised their unwillingness to negotiate on the substance of the matter. Adequate solutions to the problem of militarization could be found only through a constructive approach, which resulted from the necessary political will of States and which was reflected in the relevant negotiations.

/...

(Mr. Kovacic, Czechoslovakia)

38. Referring to the work of the Legal Sub-Committee, he stressed the need for it speedily to complete its work on an international legal instrument to govern activities in the field of remote sensing of the earth from space, especially in view of the imminent involvement of private corporations.

39. Moreover, the problem of the definition and delimitation of outer space was of practical importance in order to determine the exact area to be covered by space law and to regulate matters pertaining to militarization. He drew attention to the fact that the area in which geostationary satellites were placed was governed by the relevant provisions of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. The specific needs of the developing countries and the geographical location of certain States should be taken into account in planning the use of the geostationary orbit.

40. In examining the results of the extension of the Legal Sub-Committee's mandate, it was necessary also to consider the proposal for the elaboration of an international legal instrument to govern direct television broadcasting by satellites, based on the principles endorsed by the General Assembly in 1982, as well as the Soviet proposal for the elaboration of general principles governing the use of space technology for practical purposes.

41. His delegation would support every effort to create the necessary conditions for peaceful co-operation and for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The resources thus saved could help to solve world problems. However, the technology currently used for peaceful purposes, such as rescuing ships and airplanes in emergency situations, must not eventually be devoted to military purposes.

42. In conclusion, he drew attention to the appeal issued by the national space research committees of the socialist States, which was contained in document A/39/666 and which was addressed to all who cared about the peaceful future of mankind.

43. Mr. KOLOSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) drew attention to the comments made at the current meeting which attempted to attribute equal responsibility for the arms race in outer space to the two main space Powers. The arguments used were groundless, and, as confirmation, he drew attention to the specific proposals put forward by the Soviet Union with a view to preventing an extension of the arms race into outer space and to the practical measures which it had taken unilaterally, for instance, the moratorium on the launching of anti-satellite weapons. Failure to recognize the value of those steps constituted either bias or political myopia, which, in the past, had frequently had direct consequences.

44. Mr. LOWELL (United States of America) said that his delegation wished to reply to the false allegations made by the representatives of the Byelorussian SSR and Czechoslovakia to the effect that his Government was interested in an arms race in outer space. Those allegations had misrepresented both the facts and his Government's position, and he rejected them. However, his delegation agreed with

/...

(Mr. Lowell, United States)

the representative of the Soviet Union that it was incorrect to attribute equal responsibility to the two space Powers, and he expressed the hope that the Soviet Union would be equally forthcoming at the January talks in Geneva.

45. Mr. TERNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) welcomed the fact that the representative of the United States had listened to his statement so carefully, but he pointed out that nothing in that statement had been contrary to the facts, which were well known to all.

MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1984-1989

46. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/SPC/39/L.32, in which the Chairman of the Fifth Committee requested views on the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989, and he asked members to submit any views they might have no later than 5 December.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.