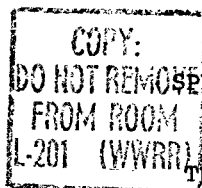




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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
40th meeting
held on
Thursday, 21 November 1985
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 40th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KORHONEN (Finland)

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CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE: REPORT
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

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ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(continued) (A/40/99, A/40/272, A/SPC/40/3)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued)
(A/40/20 and Corr.1)
- (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/40/621)

1. Mr. POTTS (Australia) said that his country had supported the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) since its inception. However, the past few years had shown that the effectiveness of COPUOS was endangered by its failure to maintain consensus and that there was a need to instil new life into its work. The task of establishing ways and means for developing outer space for peaceful purposes was at the core of the Committee's mandate, yet the essential meaning of that task was a matter of debate. With reference to the militarization of outer space, his delegation agreed that the extension of the arms race into outer space should be avoided, through the addition of new agreements to the existing treaties and accords governing such activities.

2. It was Australia's belief that the military use of satellites did not necessarily run counter to the goal of preserving outer space for peaceful purposes, since many satellites helped to verify compliance with arms control agreements and to warn against potentially destabilizing military developments. It was also the view of his delegation that the primary responsibility for considering ways and means of preventing an arms race in outer space rested with the Conference on Disarmament, and that it would be irresponsible for the Special Political Committee to attempt to duplicate that task.

3. His delegation had placed particular emphasis on the work of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and had endeavoured to ensure that the deliberations of that Sub-Committee continued to focus on issues of concern, particularly to the developing countries. The work accomplished by the Legal Sub-Committee had also been useful in the drafting of potentially acceptable legal principles on remote sensing. His delegation regretted that the negotiations of COPUOS on that subject had failed to achieve a finalization of those principles but remained convinced that a mutually agreeable conclusion remained within reach.

4. His delegation hoped that COPUOS would achieve substantial progress in 1986, and appealed to all delegations to work for the adoption by the General Assembly of a realistic and pragmatic resolution on agenda item 76.

5. Mr. WERNDL (Federal Republic of Germany) said that he fully associated himself with the statement to be made by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the States members of the European Community. His Government had always taken a keen

(Mr. Werndl, Federal Republic
of Germany)

interest in the work of COPUOS and therefore regretted that it had not been possible to reach generally acceptable solutions during the twenty-eighth session of that Committee. The extraordinary progress of space research demanded the revitalization of the Committee, in order to enable it to deal with additional major tasks. In particular, the Committee and its Sub-Committees should play a more active part in promoting the exchange of information on possible applications of new knowledge gained through outer space programmes. In view of the importance of such tasks, the Committee should not be burdened with topics, such as disarmament, which were alien to its mandate.

6. The prevention of an arms race in space was one of the agreed objectives of the bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union in Geneva. If COPUOS were to deal with both arms control and the peaceful uses of outer space, its work would inevitably be further politicized and impaired, as was apparent from the results of the twenty-eighth session of the Committee, which had been largely devoted to the formalization of principles relating to remote sensing of the Earth from space. His delegation hoped that it would be possible for the present compromise to be adopted unanimously at the Committee's next session.

7. It was also regrettable that the twenty-eighth session of the Committee had failed to produce a consensus on the method of notification of the re-entry of satellites equipped with nuclear power sources. His delegation strongly supported the recommendation of the Committee that work should begin on the elaboration of draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. It also viewed with concern the dangers inherent in the uncontrolled movement of various materials in outer space. With regard to the utilization of the geostationary orbit, the recent Conference on the Utilization of the Geostationary Orbit at Geneva had shown that a consensus could be achieved through intensive negotiations.

8. His Government continued to attach great importance to international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space and had actively engaged in such co-operation with several different countries. It had stated its willingness to provide 37.5 per cent of the European contribution towards the proposed international space station of the European Space Agency and was also bearing 22.5 per cent of the cost of developing the Ariane 5 launcher. It had also played a major role in the construction and scientific supervision of the second SPACELAB mission. The mission was a further indication of close and fruitful international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space, without the aid of a new supranational bureaucracy.

9. His Government felt that it would be wrong to link peaceful co-operation in outer space to the political precondition of non-militarization. The use of satellites for reconnaissance, the verification of arms control agreements, and for early warning purposes, might well have a stabilizing effect. The essential point was to prevent not the militarization of outer space but the launching of an arms race in that area. Collective solutions to that problem must allow for the legitimate interests of all concerned.

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10. Mr. KOLOSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the maintenance of peace was directly linked to the task of solving the problem of how to use outer space. Peaceful coexistence must be based on rejection of the use of force, arms limitation and disarmament, and the development of positive co-operation in international relations. The Soviet Union had put forward a number of proposals in the United Nations concerning the non-use of force in outer space. At the current session of the General Assembly, the Soviet Union had proposed a specific programme for developing international co-operation in the peaceful exploitation of outer space.

11. The use of force to settle international problems was alien to socialism as a socio-political system. The declaration of the countries members of the Warsaw Treaty signed at Sofia on 23 October 1985 expressed their support for the constructive position of the Soviet Union aimed at the practical solution of the problem of preventing an arms race in outer space and halting it on Earth. The future of mankind was at stake: either outer space would be used to improve living conditions on earth, or it would be turned into a source of mortal danger.

12. Socialism was characterized by a constant effort to promote broad international co-operation in the peaceful use of outer space. The proposals put forward by the Soviet Union on the main lines and principles of international co-operation in the peaceful exploitation of outer space under conditions of its non-militarization (A/SPC/40/3) were in keeping it with the agenda item of COPUOS concerning ways and means for maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. It was gratifying to note that that Committee had recognized the need to maintain outer space for peaceful purposes and had agreed that it could make important contributions to that end. However, the Committee had been unable to reach agreement on concrete measures which would be taken.

13. Some delegations felt that COPUOS was not the suitable forum for arms control negotiations. In that connection, his delegation stressed that outer space had not yet become an arena for the arms race. Accordingly, it was still not too late to formulate and undertake political and legal obligations to exclude the arms race from outer space. Positive co-operation in using the achievements of outer space science for the benefit of all countries was a further reason to prevent the militarization of outer space. The Soviet proposals on the main lines and principles of international co-operation in the peaceful exploitation of outer space under conditions of its non-militarization should therefore be discussed in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. That was in accordance with the proposal mentioned in paragraph 27 of the report of the Committee (A/40/20). Furthermore, the General Assembly should entrust COPUOS with the task of laying the groundwork for the establishment of the world space organization referred to in the Soviet proposals.

14. The establishment of a world space organization would prevent the spread of the arms race to outer space. Instead of creating space weapons, States would jointly undertake the task of using outer space for peaceful purposes within the framework of that organization.

(Mr. Kolosov, USSR)

15. International co-operation in outer space could be greatly enhanced if all States rejected the militarization of outer space. It was the position of the Soviet Government that the exploitation of the unlimited expanses of outer space should become the joint task of States. The world space organization referred to in the Soviet proposals would be the centre for co-ordinating the efforts to carry out that task.

16. His delegation felt that the General Assembly should adopt the report of COPUOS. Moreover, in order to give further impetus to its activities, the Committee at its next session could consider the possibility of preparing for a conference on the question of establishing a world space organization. The Committee's schedule of work for 1986 should be approved.

17. In 1985, a United Nations international seminar on satellite communications had been held in Moscow. The Soviet Union would regularly hold such seminars for nationals of developing countries in the future. Eighteen students specializing in aerial geodesy from a number of third world countries were currently studying at the Moscow Institute of Geodesic Engineers. His Government would continue to award 10 scholarships annually for study at the Institute to students recommended by the United Nations.

18. His delegation stressed the need for continued co-operation within the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee on the question of remote sensing of the Earth by satellites. The development of such co-operation would undoubtedly contribute to the speedy adoption of legal principles governing that question. The Soviet delegation also supported the efforts of those members of the Legal Sub-Committee who sought to elaborate in 1986 legal principles in that field.

19. The delimitation of airspace and outer space was an important legal question which should be settled speedily in order to maintain the validity of the principle of the full and exclusive sovereignty of States over their airspace and the principle of the freedom to use outer space.

20. The effectiveness of the work of COPUOS and its Sub-Committees could not be enhanced by excluding from its agenda questions which remained unresolved and replacing them with new questions. At the same time the exploration of outer space gave rise to new questions which must be resolved with the help of COPUOS. In that regard he supported the proposal made by numerous delegations concerning the elaboration of a legally binding document on principles relating to the use by States of artificial earth satellites for direct television broadcasting (A/AC.105/352, annex III, paras. 14-21, annex IV B). Lastly, he stressed that one of the basic tasks of COPUOS was to exclude weapons from outer space and called upon its members to do everything possible to achieve positive results in the interest of all countries and mankind in general.

21. Mr. FALTZ (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the ten States members of the European Community and of Spain and Portugal, said that the development of outer space would not take place without major legal, scientific and technical challenges

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(Mr. Faltz, Luxembourg)

to the international community. In the scientific and technical fields, the current high level of international co-operation on the peaceful uses of outer space must be extended in order to promote the economic and social well-being of mankind. The results and follow-up activities of the second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space provided a good illustration of the positive contribution such activities could provide, particularly to developing countries. With regard to legal matters, new solutions were required for the numerous problems posed by space exploration. The progressive formulation of laws governing the peaceful uses of outer space was dependent upon full and constructive international co-operation.

22. His delegation regretted that consensus had not been achieved within the Committee on the recommendations and decisions contained in document A/40/20. It hoped that agreement would still be reached on principles concerning remote sensing of the Earth by satellites and on norms of international law relating to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Such progress would be possible only if the Committee were to concentrate on questions within its mandate and to leave consideration of other matters to the appropriate bilateral or multilateral bodies. The ideas contained in the working paper (A/40/20, annex II) submitted by certain States members of COPUOS on 14 June 1985 provided interesting ideas with regard to the improvement of the organization and method of work of the Committee. COPUOS should also address itself to other areas of international co-operation on the peaceful uses of outer space, with the aim of reaching agreements which might be of practical advantage to all States, and particularly to developing countries.

23. The Committee had managed to achieve substantial results with regard to the co-ordination of international co-operation in outer space, and had made considerable progress in the formulation of legal principles governing the peaceful uses of outer space. His delegation believed that the same spirit of co-operation and desire for consensus which had enabled the Committee to obtain such results must guide its work in the future if it wished to achieve comparable successes. He hoped that the Special Political Committee would be able to adopt by consensus a resolution on the important agenda item before it.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.