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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. POSSO SERRANO (Ecuador)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 73: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued) (A/45/20 and A/45/589; A/SPC/45/L.17)

1. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria), introducing draft resolution A/SPC/45/L.17 on behalf of the Working Group on International Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, stressed that it had been based on the input of a large number of delegations and hoped that it would be adopted without a vote.

2. Mr. ALZATE (Colombia) said it was a cause of concern to his delegation that the international norms applicable to outer space had not kept pace with the astounding advances in space technology. His delegation took the view that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) must be informed of progress made in the Conference on Disarmament, in particular with regard to the prevention of the spread of the arms race to outer space. Colombia disagreed with those delegations that sought to limit the Committee's competence to questions of a purely scientific and technical nature.

3. International co-operation on the peaceful uses of outer space must take into consideration the needs of the developing countries and the special geographical circumstances of certain States. The reports of the Committee should not be based solely on those areas in which it had been possible to reach a consensus; they should also reflect all exchanges of opinion, even when it had not been possible to reach an agreement, because that furthered the co-operation process.

4. His delegation took note with satisfaction of the preparation of a number of studies relating to the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82). It was to be hoped that appropriate measures would be taken to allocate financial resources for the implementation of those recommendations. Training must be improved so that developing countries could have better access to technical and legal information. His delegation was pleased that national officials and experts would be taken into account during the allocation of training programmes. Colombia expressed its gratitude to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and China for their fellowship offers for 1990-1991 and to other countries that had carried out activities in that area.

5. His delegation had given careful consideration to matters relating to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, a subject that had direct applications for developing countries. Such activities must be undertaken within a framework of international co-operation, bearing in mind the concept of equal access to information. States must be aware of, and give their consent for, the remote sensing activities taking place above their territories.

6. Colombia supported the position of those States that considered it necessary to define clearly the boundary between airspace and outer space, because that would clarify the scope of application of the international treaties on outer space. In

(Mr. Alzate, Colombia)

that context, it was important to bear in mind the unique and limited nature of the geostationary orbit, which required a special legal régime. As an equatorial country, Colombia was concerned about the saturation of the geostationary orbit. A special régime for the geostationary orbit would not be in conflict with the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, which did not specifically cover the geostationary orbit. It was unfair to suggest that an applicable régime already existed or that it was not necessary. In that context, his delegation supported a continuing discussion of the general ideas formulated in document A/AC.105/430, annex 2, paragraph 20.

7. Mr. NAIMI-ARFA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation believed the most fundamental step towards ensuring the exploration and use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes would be the banning of arms in outer space. Ironically, at a time when tensions between the super-Powers were relaxed, new resources were still being allocated to bolster military activity in outer space. The super-Powers must intensify their efforts to conclude a comprehensive treaty banning arms in outer space.

8. UNISPACE 82 recommendations to meet the needs of developing countries with regard to space technology were extremely important, but had not yet been fully implemented. The recommendations contained in the report of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee on its twenty-seventh session (A/AC.105/456) provided a sound basis for their implementation. Long-range fellowships for in-depth training would also promote greater co-operation in space science and technology between developed and developing countries. Remote sensing could be of great value to their socio-economic development plans. As a country faced with frequent natural disasters, Iran wished to increase utilization of space technology applications in order to minimize and alleviate their impact. The geostationary orbit was another limited natural resource with special importance to telecommunications, and all countries must be guaranteed equal access to it, developing countries in particular.

9. In the context of its first five-year economic, social and development plan (1989-1993), Iran planned to conduct a feasibility study on possible uses of space technology in remote sensing, meteorology, education and communication. It had participated in Intelsat V and planned to participate in Intelsat VI as well. It was also considering the establishment of a national space agency to co-ordinate and organize its space-related activities, including implementation of a domestic satellite network through manufacture and launch of its national domestic satellite.

10. Mr. HERNANDEZ BASAVE (Mexico) said that it was urgently important for the United Nations to promote effective measures for preventing the growing militarization of outer space. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) had been considering ways and means of preserving outer space for peaceful uses for the past seven years, as had the Conference on Disarmament for the past eight, reflecting the international community's concern at the

(Mr. Hernandez Basave, Mexico)

militarization of outer space. The work of COPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament should be expanded to include an exchange of information between those two bodies.

11. His delegation disagreed with those who maintained that COPUOS was not competent to consider the question of the militarization of outer space. On the contrary, by focusing on scientific, technical and legal aspects of the problem, the Committee would be of great use in the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament.

12. His delegation was pleased at the agreement reached in the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee on the recommendations for the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Unfortunately, the Sub-Committee had not been able to make more substantive progress in drafting scientific and technical critieria for the safe use of nuclear energy in outer space. Mexico was, however, confident that the Sub-Committee would soon be able to agree on a series of principles. Of particular importance was the need to define clearly the term "launching State" and the responsibilities assigned to it. That question should be examined at the next meeting of the Legal Sub-Committee.

13. Approval of principles governing the use of nuclear power sources in outer space would be an additional contribution by the Committee to the development of international space law. His delegation expressed its appreciation to the delegation of Canada for the efforts it had made in that area.

14. His delegation supported the proposal of Sweden to consider the question of space debris. The Legal Sub-Committee should consider the applicability of the principle of transparency to all space activities. The Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space would be a good starting point in that regard. Consideration should be given to adapting the relevant international instruments so as to achieve universal applicability of the legal régime for outer space.

15. Progressive development of space law must be given high priority in the United Nations. An examination of the legal aspects of the exploration and utilization of outer space must take particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries by focusing on the creation of a legal framework guaranteeing a fair distribution of the benefits resulting from space activities.

16. As a member of the Group of 77, Mexico called upon all delegations to participate constructively in the Working Group established to consider that new subject. It also supported the proposal of the Group of 77 to begin co-operating with the Working Group of the Whole to Evaluate the Implementation of the Recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

17. With regard to matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, his delegation viewed with concern the fact that a number of countries favoured solving

(Mr. Hernandez Basave, Mexico)

that problem by merely eliminating the Legal Sub-Committee's Programme. While for certain space Powers, the absence of a boundary between airspace and outer space entailed no practical difficulties, for the majority of countries, the boundary of their sovereignty in the airspace remained a problem.

18. Mexico supported the proposal by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to begin consideration in 1991 of international legal problems relating to the flights of aerospace systems. It was also necessary to analyse the proposal to establish a special legal régime for the geostationary orbit. The unofficial working paper presented in the Legal Sub-Committee in 1989 by a group of equatorial countries was a good basis for considering that question.

19. Of the items on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee, those dealing with the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 were those that would have the most direct effect for improving international co-operation in outer space. For the developing countries, such mechanisms were an opportunity to gain access to the benefits derived from space technology. Notwithstanding the additional contributions from Member States and organizations, the Programme still had considerable difficulties with financial resources. Until those resources were increased, the Programme could hardly have a significant impact. With regard to the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, his delegation supported the recommendations of the Working Group that the Programme continue to be primarily of broad scope and directed towards on-site training for space-technology projects. Mexico also expressed an interest in implementing the recommendations of the Working Group. In particular, it called upon all States, especially those with space capabilities, to inform the Secretary-General annually on activities that might improve international co-operation.

20. It was essential to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the end of the cold war and the tangible progress in arms reduction achieved by the super-Powers to avert an arms race in outer space.

21. Mr. TODOROV (Bulgaria) said that the peaceful conquest of space involved goals that could only be met by the joint efforts of the entire international community. Rapid progress in space technology had resulted also in developments with a direct impact on peoples' lives. It would be very difficult to imagine the world communications and weather forecasting network without satellites, for example.

22. Though Bulgaria was a small country with limited resources, it had participated actively in international, regional and bilateral co-operation in space activities. Two Bulgarian cosmonauts had flown aboard Soviet space ships, and Bulgarian-designed equipment had successfully performed in the Phobos and Shipka projects. The major political and economic changes under way in Bulgaria also were having an impact on science and applied research, by streamlining the institutional basis and management. Space research priorities were in the process of reassessment, which would result in a new long-term National Space Programme.

(Mr. Todorov, Bulgaria)

23. Substantial progress had been achieved at the last session of the Legal Sub-Committee towards agreement on the principles of the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. In the view of his delegation, the next item which the Sub-Committees should consider was the problem of space ecology, including the issues of space debris and the use of space research and technology for environmental protection of Earth and its atmosphere. The specific proposals concerning the delimitation of outer space and the geostationary orbit made during the sessions of the two sub-committees were a good basis for further debate. His delegation also supported the proclamation by the General Assembly of International Space Year in 1992. Its goals were to strengthen international co-operation in space research and to co-ordinate mankind's efforts to achieve those priorities.

24. Mr. MOUNKHOU (Mongolia) said that improved international co-operation would provide an opportunity to strengthen the political and material basis for the peaceful uses of outer space in the interest of all nations, in particular the needy ones. It was to be hoped that the United Nations would play an enhanced role in the area.

25. His delegation reiterated its support of the agreement reached on the set of recommendations concerning the safe use of nuclear power sources in outer space. It welcomed the decision to consider at the 1991 session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee applications of airborne and satellite remote sensing for prospecting mineral and ground-water resources and for monitoring and managing biological resources, with emphasis on agriculture, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries. That would greatly contribute to implementing the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. Studies submitted to the next session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee would be more useful if they contained the latest information on space applications of practical importance for the developing countries.

26. His delegation endorsed the view that COPUOS should endeavour to conduct evaluations of the impact of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications on the efforts of developing countries to use the spin-off benefits of space science and technology for their development needs.

27. Mongolia welcomed the inclusion in the 1991 agenda of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee of an item concerning the progress in national and international space activities related to the Earth's environment. In that connection, it might be appropriate for COPUOS to prepare special research material to facilitate the developing countries' application of space science and technology for protecting the environment.

28. Deliberations at the past sessions of the Sub-Committee had underlined the increasing need for the establishment of an international framework for providing developing countries easy access to relevant scientific information and technological achievements. The good will of all States members of COPUOS with a space capability would help create a favourable atmosphere for considering the legal aspects relating to implementation of the principle that the exploration and

(Mr. Mounkhou, Mongolia)

utilization of outer space must be for the benefit of all States, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries.

29. Mongolia urged the United Nations to do its utmost so that the international space information service and regional training centres recommended by General Assembly resolution 44/46 could be established well before International Space Year in 1992. Mongolia was keenly interested in participating in and benefiting from all major activities carried out by the United Nations in the exploration and uses of outer space. Owing to its extremely limited technological basis and financial resources, Mongolia relied heavily on the support and co-operation of countries and organizations with space capabilities. It was to be hoped that the positive changes in international relations and the spirit of growing co-operation would help create more favourable conditions for enabling the developing countries to make increased use of space technology to promote their social and economic development.

30. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO (Burkina Faso) said that space science and technology could make significant contributions to economic and social development and to environmental protection. All mankind was not able to profit from its applications, however, and the gap between countries with access to space technology and those without such access appeared to widen with each new technological development. For developing countries, International Space Year, proclaimed for 1992, was an opportunity to become more involved in space technology applications. It would have increasing uses for economic and social development, for example, in communications, prospecting for natural resources, meteorology, agriculture, cartography and search and rescue missions.

31. Her delegation supported the proposed programme for United Nations participation in International Space Year (A/AC.105/445). The needs of developing countries, particularly in education and awareness, would be addressed. Demystification and dissemination of space science and technology would encourage States to undertake national programmes for their application. Celebration of International Space Year provided an opportunity for evaluation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 and adjustment in goals as needed.

32. In order to ensure that outer space was utilized for peaceful means, international space law must be developed further. An international agency or court should be established with the purpose of enforcing that law and ensuring that space was used exclusively for peaceful means, to the benefit of all States.

33. Her delegation was pleased that the next session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee would address applications of remote sensing for natural resource and ground-water prospecting. Burkina Faso had understood quickly the impact that remote sensing could have on its country's development but lacked the means to employ it. The high cost of analysis and study of remote sensing data put it out of the reach of those countries with the greatest need for it in their economic and social development. Africa must give higher priority to remote sensing applications in its development programmes. Some States, despite their

(Mrs. Ouedraogo, Burkina Faso)

awareness of the importance of space activities, faced financial limitations, however. Such was the case for the regional remote sensing centre at Ouagadougou. It had been established in 1977 by the Economic Commission for Africa with the objectives of facilitating access to remote sensing for all States through operation of a reception station and storage, reproduction and dissemination of data, providing data analysis to members, and developing a training and assistance programme. Due to non-payment of contributions by member States, the centre was now experiencing major financial difficulties. As part of the preparations for International Space Year, her delegation suggested activities to sensitize and mobilize those States who could furnish that centre with adequate financial resources.

34. Mrs. SINHA (India) said that India was strongly committed to the peaceful uses of outer space. Its national space programme allied international co-operation with the application of modern technology to the needs of a developing nation. The Indian multi-purpose satellite INSAT-1D had been launched in June 1990, and the indigenously built Indian Remote Sensing Satellite IRS-1A had been operating successfully for two years. Through its "sharing of experience" (SHARES) programme, India had provided training in several space applications to people from other developing countries. It had also participated in the international Satellite-Aided Search and Rescue programme by establishing a local user terminal and mission control centre.

35. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) had made significant contributions to developing international space law and providing space applications assistance to developing countries. However, there was still a large gap between the needs of many countries and the resources available. Some progress had been made by the Committee in evolving international legal and technical principles to ensure the safe use of nuclear power sources in outer space; she hoped that the Committee would soon reach a common understanding on that item. In view of the danger posed by the growing amounts of debris in outer space, her delegation wished to see that item included in the agenda of the Committee or its Sub-Committees. The Committee's agenda item entitled "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes" was linked with the question of preventing an arms race in outer space. The work of the Committee and that of the Conference on Disarmament should thus be complementary and carried out in co-ordination. The Committee should make special efforts to ensure that International Space Year (1992) activities and programmes benefited the developing countries. To that end, India was collaborating with the United Nations Programme on Space Applications to organize a workshop on basic space sciences for developing nations. It had also made proposals in the Space Agency Forum on International Space Year for operative use of space through a mission called "Peace" (Protection of Environment for Assuring Cleaner Earth).

36. More intensive international co-operation and the development of indigenous capabilities were needed to enable developing countries to reap the benefits of space technology. There should be no restrictions on technical information exchange, training or supply of equipment for peaceful developmental applications.

(Mrs. Sinha, India)

Her delegation wished to see those problems effectively addressed under the new agenda item of the Legal Sub-Committee.

37. Mr. PERRI (Brazil) expressed his country's grave concern over the persistence of barriers to the free exchange of scientific and technological information that impeded access to and production and use of space technology, which had become increasingly important for social and economic development. No particular State or group of States should take advantage of its technological need to impose restrictions or discriminatory regulations on others. Such practices ran counter to the spirit of the Outer Space Treaty. Direct negotiations, particularly within COPUOS, should promote confidence among countries and ensure that the flow of such knowledge be used strictly for peaceful purposes. Peace was related to freedom of information and knowledge. Some of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had yet to be implemented. The most important goals were making outer space a "province of mankind" and extending to all nations the non-discriminatory means to develop their national space programmes, individually and in association with others. COPUOS was called upon to further develop, in the form of legal principles, basic guidelines for the development of international co-operation in outer space. In 1991, the Working Group of the Legal Sub-Committee would consider a new item entitled "outer space benefits", aimed at defining a general framework for space activity support based on the principle of preferential and non-reciprocal assistance to developing countries. As stressed by the representative of Nigeria, there was a need for an international framework for the development of national space capabilities; exchange of data and information between space Powers and others; joint partnerships between space Powers and others regarding design, manufacture of equipment, launching of space objects, etc.; and an appropriate framework for redistributing the spin-offs of space science.

38. The need to ensure that space should be used strictly for peaceful purposes and the need to foster space co-operation underscored the complementarity of the work of United Nations forums such as COPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament. However, procedural objections had been raised in an attempt to obscure that complementarity. His delegation understood the specific responsibilities of the Conference on Disarmament and COPUOS, but felt that they should be mutually interactive in order to avoid duplication and pursue more effectively the goal of using outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of mankind.

39. Increasing attention had been paid to space applications regarding the monitoring and protection of the environment, as recommended by General Assembly resolution 44/46 on international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space. Particular attention should be paid to the question of space debris. The Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee's report had included a special section on space and earth environment and had redrafted an item to read "Progress in national and international space activities related to Earth environment, in particular, progress in the geosphere-biosphere (global change) programme". Consideration should be given to ways of complementing the efforts under way for the United

(Mr. Perri, Brazil)

Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be hosted by Brazil in 1992. He welcomed the progress made in both the Scientific and Technical and the Legal Sub-Committees regarding the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Consideration should be given to the important question of prior notification of the launching of space objects with nuclear power sources on board in order to enhance confidence and enable precautionary measures to be taken. Agreement on a final set of principles on nuclear power sources in outer space was now within reach. He hoped that such a set of principles might be adopted at the 1991 session of COPUOS in Graz, Austria. Other issues related to Earth and space environment might also be considered in future by the Committee. Priority should be given to threats to the Earth's environment from space activities and to the preservation of space environment itself, in the hope that patterns of use of resources on Earth might not be repeated in outer space. It was essential to seize the moment and build on the new international climate lest current opportunities be missed.

40. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) asked that note should be taken in plenary session of the excellent work of the Outer Space Affairs Division and the Secretariat. He thanked the Chairman of the Working Group for his painstaking preparation of draft resolution A/SPC/45/L.17, which he hoped would be adopted by consensus. He drew attention to the important contribution of the representative of the Vatican and to the serious technical work accomplished in the Committee on the question of debris in outer space.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.