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Chairman: Mr. Macedo (Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 82: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/53/20, A/53/265)

1. **The Chairman** drew the attention of Committee members to the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) (A/53/20) and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/53/265), and said that 1998 was the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of COPUOS. Within a year of the launch of the first artificial satellite in 1957, the General Assembly had adopted the resolution creating that body, which recognized that “outer space should be used for peaceful purposes only” and expressed the desire “to promote energetically the fullest exploration and exploitation of outer space for the benefit of mankind”.

2. The creation of the Committee had been crucial at the time of dangers of a serious confrontation between great Powers that could threaten humanity’s existence. The international community had been concerned with the possibility of outer space being used as a battleground, and accordingly the United Nations had continued to take measures to ensure that outer space was a source of cooperation. Thanks to its efforts, a legal regime had been established consisting of five international treaties and five sets of principles governing space activities. That regime had contributed to enhancing opportunities for cooperation between countries and also between industries. The use of space technology was no longer limited to policy makers and experts, but belonged to all people, to meet their common needs.

3. People now had tools for better management of land and ocean resources, for agricultural development and for urban planning, thanks to remote sensing satellites. Satellite navigation systems increased the safety of land, sea and air travel; space communications shrank distances; satellite provided important information for early warning of natural disasters and mitigation of their consequences, and could also serve as powerful tools to enhance access to medical services and educational opportunities in remote and rural areas, particularly in developing countries. The United Nations, in partnership with civil society, should ensure that those benefits of space technology were shared by all people around the world. In that regard, it should be recalled that in 1997 the General Assembly had agreed that the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) should be convened in Vienna from

19–30 July 1999, under the theme “Space benefits for humanity in the twenty-first century”. He was pleased to note that the Preparatory Committee for the Conference had made much progress in finalizing arrangements for it, including the preparation of the draft report. That Conference and the new concept of trusteeship being elaborated within the framework of the reform process provided an opportunity to plan effective international cooperation under the umbrella of the United Nations to ensure that the benefit of space technology was shared by all countries.

4. **Ms. Butschek** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, as well as of the associated countries Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the European Union considered space technology to be a highly important and promising instrument capable of solving a number of global problems the international community was currently facing. It therefore reaffirmed its commitment to international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. The European Union welcomed the progress achieved in implementation of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. The member States of the European Union, as well as of the European Space Agency, had made an effort to contribute significantly to that programme. In that context, they welcomed the efforts made by the Office for Outer Space Affairs to increase inter-agency coordination and to strengthen regional mechanisms.

5. With regard to the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the problem of space debris merited particular attention. That problem was becoming more urgent as a result of space flights. Not only did it make space projects more expensive owing to the necessity of shielding against such debris, it also exposed manned space flight endeavours to growing risks. The European Union welcomed the decision by the Committee to consider the item on a priority basis with a view to finalizing and adopting the technical report.

6. With respect to the work of the Legal Subcommittee, she drew attention to two proposals put forward in connection with the review of the status of the five legal instruments governing outer space. The first proposal emanated from a working paper submitted by the European Space Agency and the States which had signed cooperation agreements with it. One of the issues raised in that working paper was the question whether or not the concept of “launching State” as defined in the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space was still adequate. To clarify that question, COPUOS had decided that at their sessions in the year 2000 its subcommittees would review the relevant materials, and informal consultations between interested Member States would take place before the next session of

COPUOS. The European Union would continue to support that initiative.

7. The second proposal aimed at improving the acceptance of already existing mechanisms for the settlement of disputes provided for in the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects. Progress in that respect could be achieved if more States, pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 2777 (XXVI) of 29 November 1971, declared that they would recognize as binding, in relation to any other State accepting the same obligation, decisions of the Claims Commission established under article XIV of the Convention.

8. Lastly, the European Union noted with satisfaction the decision to continue the use of unedited verbatim records of meetings of COPUOS instead of summary records. It was also appropriate to recall the forthcoming special session of COPUOS — the UNISPACE III Conference — to be held in 1999. The working groups of the Advisory Committee and the Preparatory Committee had been successful in drawing up the draft report of the Conference, the Executive Summary and the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development, which would facilitate consensus among the participants in UNISPACE III. Moreover, the European Union would like to see the provisional rules of procedure adopted in the form in which they appeared in the annex to document A/53/20.

9. **Mr. Tekaya** (Tunisia) said that the exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all mankind was a noble goal towards which the international community must continue to strive. The progress of science and technology enabled space technology to be adapted very effectively in various fields, particularly that of development, and his Government therefore attached great importance to it. In recent years, his Government had done a great deal of work on the creation of an infrastructure for the management of national space activities, including the establishment of a national space committee and a permanent secretariat. In addition, it had established a national remote-sensing centre, which played an important role in such fields as environmental protection, early warning of natural disasters and combating desertification. With regard to combating desertification, Tunisia was cooperating effectively with a number of Western European and North African countries. His Government considered regional and international coordination of primary importance for such activities, as it was impossible to solve ecological problems on a purely national level.

10. The transfer of space technology to developing countries continued to be highly important, as the lack of such technology prevented them from making full use of the

benefits of space activities. In that context, international cooperation was critical, and his Government paid a tribute to the United Nations bodies, programmes and agencies and the national and regional organizations which were cooperating with the developing countries to build national capacity in the use of outer space for peaceful purposes. Scientific exchanges and the organization of seminars, workshops and conferences were of great assistance in achieving that goal. His Government was grateful to the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for its help in carrying out the project entitled “Cooperative information network linking scientists and professionals in Africa (COPINE)”. That network, assisted by satellite links, was playing a very useful role in the dissemination to African countries of scientific and technical information on questions relating to the adaptation of space technology, particularly in the fields of health care, agriculture, management of the environment, education and science.

11. The international community was determined to continue its work with respect to the peaceful uses of outer space and expand the access of the developing countries to the benefits of space activities and the possibilities of their use for economic, social and cultural development. The UNISPACE III Conference to be held in 1999 should further that work. His delegation was pleased with the progress being made in the preparatory work for the Conference and reaffirmed its willingness to take an active part in it. It set great store by the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in encouraging international cooperation. Because of its desire to ensure the best possible conditions for the future work of COPUOS, his delegation again requested that Tunisia should be included in its membership.

12. **Mr. Itoh** (Japan) said that his delegation recognized the increasingly important role that COPUOS was playing in the promotion of international cooperation in the uses of outer space. Since its inception nearly four decades earlier, COPUOS had enabled the international community to benefit from the uses of outer space through the encouragement of research, the dissemination of information and the establishment of a legal framework to regulate the exploration of outer space.

13. During the current year, COPUOS had made further advances. First of all, his delegation welcomed the progress made in the preparations for the UNISPACE III Conference, to be held in Vienna in July 1999. It supported the decisions relating to the Conference, including those pertaining to its organization, venue, date, participants, provisional agenda and financial aspects. The Conference should consider the promotion of international cooperation in Earth observation

activities in order to respond to the needs of both developed and developing countries. The participation of the private sector in the work of the Conference was essential.

14. Turning to administrative matters, he noted that new work methods had been successfully introduced in COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies in recent years. As part of that reform, a new item, "Review of the status of the five international legal instruments governing outer space", had been taken up at the thirty-seventh session of the Legal Subcommittee. His delegation believed that the addition of that item had helped to revitalize the discussions. It hoped that the Subcommittee would continue its efforts to function more effectively as a forum for legal discussions concerning space. In general, his delegation was satisfied with the results of the COPUOS reform thus far and called on all delegations to advance that process.

15. **Ms. Arystanbekova** (Kazakhstan) said that, as Kazakhstan possessed a suitable space infrastructure on its Territory, particularly the Baikonur launch site, it was actively participating in international space activities and supported the efforts of the United Nations to further develop international cooperation in that field. It considered that the question of environmental and ecological protection should be one of the important areas of international cooperation, and that it was necessary to make broad use of the latest achievements of space science and technology for that purpose. It was already clear that most global problems were connected with the deterioration of the environment. Kazakhstan, which had the experience of the global ecological disaster of the Aral Sea, attached great importance to the use of the achievements of space science and technology for ecological monitoring and protection of the environment.

16. Kazakhstan was actively participating in a number of international space projects, including some dealing with the use of space science and technology to prohibit the environment and ecological systems. It had recently signed an agreement with Russia on cooperation in the use of space and aviation technology and remote sensing of the Earth. Kazakhstan's aerospace agency, together with ESCAP, FAO and the European Space Agency, had been studying the possibility of holding a regional seminar in Almaty in 1999 entitled "Remote sensing and geoinformational systems in the State management of natural resources". Kazakhstan also participated actively in the work of the Inter-State Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the study and utilization of outer space. In February 1998 an agreement on space cooperation had been signed by Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, the main purpose of which was to consolidate the efforts of the parties to make practical use of the Baikonur launch site for peaceful purposes. Under its

agreement with the Russian Federation for the leasing of the Baikonur site, Kazakhstan had since 1991 been participating in the Russian Federation's manned space programme.

17. Kazakhstan was interested in a dynamic development of cooperation with the United States under the 1994 agreement between Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the United States on technological guarantees relating to the launch of the Inmarsat-3 artificial earth satellite. In May 1998, an agreement had been signed between Kazakhstan and China on cooperation in the study and utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes. Kazakhstan was a cooperating member of the European Space Agency for the compilation of the International Catalogue of Space Objects and Fragments, as well as a member of the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific.

18. The problems dealt with in the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space relating to remote sensing, direct broadcasting and the use of nuclear energy sources in outer space were important and, under current circumstances, extremely topical. In that respect, her delegation noted with satisfaction the reference in the draft report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) to plans for the expansion of international cooperation in remote sensing and the launching for such purposes of 20 new satellites. Her delegation greatly appreciated the Committee's contribution to the expansion of international space activity and the development of space law; it should maintain its leading role in the future.

19. Her Government recognized the international agreements and regulations in force relating to the use of outer space for peaceful purposes and, with a view to becoming more closely integrated into international space activity, had ratified the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. It had also acceded to, *inter alia*, the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects and the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

20. The Advisory Committee and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had done a great deal of preparatory work for the holding of UNISPACE III. The draft report of the Conference submitted by the Committee gave a full account of the work conducted in implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, held

in 1982, and clearly defined the problem areas facing the international community in the field of international cooperation in outer space.

21. **Mr. Obeid** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed concern about programmes aimed at the use of outer space for purposes that were not conducive to peace, at a time when the issue of developing cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space was particularly topical. The participation of a Syrian astronaut in space research reflected his country's readiness to engage in international cooperation in that field. A remote-sensing institution had been established in his country and its work was directed towards the utilization of the information received for the purposes of development.

22. To ensure that outer space was used for peaceful purposes, it was essential to tighten up the regulations governing space activities. It was imperative that regulatory principles should be adopted to prevent the arms race from spilling over into outer space. In that connection, it was important for the major spacefaring States to cooperate closely with each other. It was no less important to continue the search for ways and means of solving the problems of space debris, especially debris consisting of fragments of nuclear power sources.

23. His delegation noted with satisfaction the substantive nature and content of the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its decision on preparations for UNISPACE III. Lastly, he stressed the need to establish an equitable basis for the use of the benefits derived from space exploration and, to that end, to establish an effective regulatory system governing the application of space technology, which would give the developing countries wider access to such technology and contribute to the building of a more stable world in the future.

24. **Mr. Mahtab** (India) noted the considerable progress that had been made in the preparatory work for UNISPACE III and expressed appreciation to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space for its efforts in that regard. He specifically noted the objectivity and balance of interests reflected in the draft Vienna declaration and requested all delegations to support the draft declaration in its current form.

25. Regarding India's recent achievements in space technology development and its utilization for peaceful purposes, particularly for the benefit of those at the grass-roots level, he said that the data provided by his country's remote-sensing missions were being made available to users across the globe. Significant advances in the area of satellite communications had made it possible to expand their use so as to provide a valuable link to rural areas. Another major accomplishment of the Indian space programme had been the

development of the capability to launch the 1.2 ton class of satellites into a polar sun synchronous orbit.

26. India was committed to the promotion of international cooperation in the field of space education. A large number of students from various countries in the region had attended the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, which had been established in India in November 1995. It should be emphasized that space research should benefit the grass-roots level, by enabling all Member States, particularly those in the developing world, to make the best possible use of technological breakthroughs in the field of space for their welfare and national development.

27. **Mr. Othman** (Malaysia) noted with satisfaction that special attention had been given to space technology applications for environmentally sound and sustainable development based on Agenda 21. It was important to ensure that outer space continued to be used for peaceful purposes. That could be achieved through further development of international space law and a strengthening of international cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space. His Government believed that emphasis should be placed on transparency in outer space activities as well as on the exchange of data and the equitable sharing of space benefits between developed and developing countries.

28. His delegation called on the world space community to assist through the provision of remote-sensing data during natural disasters of the type that had occurred in the South-East Asia region in connection with uncontrollable peat and forest fires. Furthermore, it urged Member States to pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including those with nuclear power sources, with space debris. His delegation believed that every possible effort had to be made to remove defunct satellites and fragments of various man-made space objects that posed a high risk of collision in outer space.

29. **Mr. Gao Feng** (China) said that the United Nations outer space programmes had enabled a useful contribution to be made to the promotion and coordination of space activities. The organs and agencies of the United Nations deserved considerable praise for facilitating implementation of those programmes.

30. China's space industry was now developing extremely rapidly. Research, design, trial manufacture and production capacities and testing systems had been established. A launching centre for all types of satellites, together with the necessary monitoring and control networks had been built. Various types of satellites developed by China were being successfully used in economic, scientific, technological and cultural fields and for the purposes of national defence. To

contribute to its sustainable development, the Chinese Government had incorporated space technology into its national overall development strategy.

31. His delegation attached great significance to the preparations for UNISPACE III and was ready to join other delegations in a concerted effort to ensure that the Conference was a success. It was gratifying to note that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Office for Outer Space Affairs had already begun to implement their functions as the Advisory Committee and executive secretariat for UNISPACE III.

32. The UNISPACE III report would be the most important document for the Conference. His delegation considered that in drafting the report it was necessary to proceed according to the following principles: first, the report should have a clear thematic focus on the fundamental objective of the Conference, and the relevant political, social and legal issues should not be neglected during the consideration of space-related science and technology. Secondly, it was necessary to underline the importance of international cooperation in the search for effective means of strengthening it, and in that endeavour the main responsibility lay with States and their Governments. Although the participation of the space industry and private enterprises was important, excessive "commercialization" of international cooperation should be avoided. Third, full account should be taken of the demands and proposals of the developing countries. Fourth, attention should also be given to measures to implement the decisions of the Conference. The plan of action, programmes and proposals contained in the report should have a clear focus so as to facilitate their effective implementation.

33. His Government supported the strengthening and enhancement of international space cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, exchange of experience and common principles of development. To that end, China had concluded intergovernmental agreements with many countries. The China State Space Administration had also signed inter-agency agreements with its counterparts in a number of countries. His Government attached great importance to cooperation with both developed and developing space countries. The "Resource I" satellite, jointly developed by China and Brazil, was in the final stages of assembly and would be launched in the near future. Regional multilateral cooperation between China, Pakistan, Korea and Thailand in developing small multi-task satellites was progressing successfully. In April 1998 in Bangkok, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Korea and Thailand had signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the multi-task satellite project and other related activities. His Government would endeavour to expand its space

cooperation with other countries in the world in order that space technology applications might be used more effectively for the benefit of humankind.

34. **Mr. González** (Chile), Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), said that in recent years the Committee had demonstrated its ability to fulfil its mandate in line with the new directions being pursued by the United Nations. The Committee had contributed to the Organization-wide efforts to do more with less, and had taken the decision to replace the costly verbatim and summary records of its meetings with unedited verbatim transcripts. A set of new measures agreed upon by the Committee and endorsed by the General Assembly last year had included introduction of the principles of equitable geographical distribution and rotation in the composition of the bureaux of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies; a shortening of the duration of the sessions of those bodies; and a broadening of the activity of the Legal Subcommittee. The Committee continued to move forward, and was prepared to demonstrate its ability to meet the goals connected with the holding of UNISPACE III, while keeping costs down. The savings made in conference-servicing resources by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies by shortening the length of their regular sessions during the current biennium would be utilized to service UNISPACE III.

35. The work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, whose report was contained in document A/53/20, covered the following three areas: ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes; preparations for UNISPACE III; the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-fifth session; the report of the Legal Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-seventh session; and spin-off benefits of space technology. In 1997, in resolution 52/56, the General Assembly had agreed that UNISPACE III should be convened in Vienna from 19 to 30 July 1999 as a special session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, open to all States Members of the United Nations. The Preparatory and Advisory Committees of the Conference had made considerable progress in the preparations for UNISPACE III. On the basis of the work of the Advisory Committee, the Preparatory Committee had made a number of recommendations, including recommendations relating to the draft report and provisional rules of procedure of UNISPACE III and the organization of the Technical Forum as a technical body of the Conference. The Preparatory Committee had also reached consensus on the text of the provisional rules of procedure, which were before the General Assembly for endorsement at the current session.

36. Preparations for UNISPACE III were well under way at the regional level. Two preparatory regional conferences had already been convened: in Malaysia, for the Asian and Pacific region, and in Chile, for the Latin American and Caribbean region. A regional preparatory conference for Africa and Western Asia would be held shortly, and a regional conference for Eastern Europe was scheduled for 25 to 29 January 1999. The reports on the work of those regional conferences would be made available in time for the 1999 session of the Advisory Committee.

37. UNISPACE III provided enormous opportunities to strengthen the partnership between Governments and space agencies, on the one hand, and the private sector and non-governmental organizations, on the other, in order to further enhance international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space into the next millennium. Through various activities of the Technical Forum, agents of civil society would be given a chance to express their views on issues of concern to them, while Governments would be able to consider the most effective ways and means to work together with those potential players to meet the goals of the United Nations.

38. Referring to the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, he said that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space noted the progress made by the Subcommittee in accordance with the multi-year work plan, which had been adopted in 1995 to address specific topics relating to space debris during the period from 1996 to 1998, the final stage of the work plan. In 1998 the work of the Subcommittee had concentrated on the consideration of space debris mitigation measures. In 1999 the Subcommittee would concentrate on finalizing the full technical report on space debris.

39. Regarding the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space noted that the Subcommittee had endorsed the work plan for the period from 2000 to 2003 and had proposed a schedule of work for developing a framework for safety assurance processes and standards for the use of nuclear power sources in outer space.

40. In view of the reduced schedule of work of the Subcommittee at its 1999 session and the preparatory work that needed to be conducted for UNISPACE III, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space agreed with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee that the Subcommittee should consider at its 1999 session the following priority items: preparations for UNISPACE III; space debris; and the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and coordination of activities within the United

Nations system. Further consideration of the other items which were on the agenda of the Subcommittee at the 1998 session would be postponed until the year 2000.

41. At the 1998 session, the Legal Subcommittee had begun its consideration of a new agenda item entitled "Review of the status of the five international legal instruments governing outer space". That was a positive step towards revitalizing the role of the Legal Subcommittee in ensuring the effectiveness of the international legal framework established by the United Nations to govern space activities. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space noted that a working group would need to be established for the 1999 session of the Subcommittee to carry out further consideration of the item in accordance with the work plan adopted in 1997. In accordance with a request by the General Assembly, the Legal Subcommittee had also continued its informal consultations on the inclusion of new items in the Subcommittee's agenda. Although in 1998 the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had been unable to reach agreement on the inclusion of a new item on the improvement of the Registration Convention, it welcomed inter-sessional consultations among interested delegations to seek a consensus on the matter before the 1999 session of the Subcommittee.

42. Recent accomplishments of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space while contributing to the efficiency of the Organization in pursuing its goals also indicated that that Committee was one of the bodies most able to respond to the needs of the global society and take concrete action based on mutual cooperation, trust and confidence among Member States.

43. Speaking as the representative of Chile, he said that from 12 to 16 October, a regional preparatory conference for UNISPACE III had been held in Concepción, Chile. Representatives from Latin America, along with representatives of the Caribbean countries, had carried out the task entrusted to them and prepared the Concepción declaration. On behalf of his Government, he officially requested that the declaration should be circulated as a General Assembly document at the current session. In addition, he requested that a paragraph taking note of the adoption of the Concepción declaration should be included in the draft resolution adopted every year by the Committee on the item "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space".

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.