UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
6th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 28 October 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

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92-57288 6251S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/47/SR.6
17 November 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/47/20)

(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 (A/47/383)

1. Mr. TISLER (Czechoslovakia) said that 1992 - International Space Year - had witnessed the commemoration of many important events in the field of outer space: the world was remembering the first flight of an artificial satellite and marking the anniversaries of the adoption of important instruments such as 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, and the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects.

2. His delegation appreciated the contributions of the various delegations, particularly that of Canada, which had led to the adoption of the set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources (NPS) on board space objects. Outer space activities were raising problems of ecology and the protection of the living environment.

3. Since more detailed information on Czechoslovak space research was contained in Czechoslovakia's report on space activities, he would mention only a few notable achievements: the launching of the small satellite Magion 3, put into orbit within the international Apex project, various in-flight physiological experiments, and the development of several instruments by the Czechoslovak Academy of Science. He thanked the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for organizing two seminars in Czechoslovakia and the European Community for starting the Land Cover project in Central and Eastern Europe.

4. Mr. TANG Chengyuan (China) recalled the various commemorative activities concerning International Space Year carried out world wide, and hoped that they would further facilitate international cooperation and technological development in the interests of all countries, the developing countries in particular. China had organized and supported a number of commemorative activities and had donated $30,000 to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to show its support. China also wished to be an active participant in the work and related activities of the Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

5. He described a number of China's activities in the field of outer space in 1992, including the launch and recovery of satellites and the installation throughout the country of a high-precision network using the global satellite

(Mr. Tang Chengyuan, China)

fixing system. A number of such activities had been carried out in cooperation with other countries, particularly Australia and Sweden.

6. With respect to the adoption of the draft set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, his delegation welcomed the consensus reached by the Committee and looked forward to the consideration and adoption of those principles at the current session of the General Assembly. However, his delegation wished to note that certain provisions still left room for improvement: for example, no explicit provisions were made as to the prohibition of the use of nuclear power sources for military purposes. Thus, work on future consideration and revision of the principles would be arduous. China would make its views known in detail at an appropriate time.

7. In conclusion, the peaceful exploration and use of outer space should be in the interests of all mankind; it was imperative to strengthen international cooperation between developed and developing countries, as well as between space and non-space countries, especially with respect to technology transfer. As a developing space country, China would do its share so as to create a brighter future for mankind.

8. Mr. YAMAMOTO (Japan) said that, in the current era of profound change in all areas, a steady, careful approach was needed in order to strike a balance among various interests of States in space-related activities. While the Outer Space Treaty characterized the exploration and use of outer space as the province of all mankind, its motivating principle was preventive diplomacy.

9. There was a need to consolidate international cooperation in tackling the new challenges. Japan was conscious of its responsibilities and was devoting much time and energy to its programme of environmental monitoring satellites, applying its advanced space technologies for the good of all mankind. Similarly, Japan was taking an active role in the work of COPUOS and was pleased to note that the Committee had completed its work on the draft principles on the use of nuclear power sources. A feature of the draft principles was their balanced expression, and when they came to be considered and reviewed, the essential criteria should be practicality, adaptability and stability.

10. On the question of space debris, Japan still had some doubts as to whether national research had progressed sufficiently to allow a useful discussion in the international forum but understood the concern of many delegations about the possible serious implications of space debris. It would therefore make no objection to the inclusion of the item in the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. The discussion should however be directed towards striking a balance between the maximization of the effective use of orbits and the minimization of possible danger.

11. Japan shared the concern voiced by many countries about the lack of financial resources to implement the recommendations of the United Nations

(Mr. Yamamoto, Japan)

Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), which remained an important goal. Thus it regarded as legitimate the request for an adequate budgetary allocation for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, though the overall financial situation of the United Nations should, of course, be taken into account.

12. His delegation emphasized the need for further efforts to rationalize the work of COPUOS and welcomed the many suggestions and ideas put forward in that connection, particularly with respect to the work of the Legal Subcommittee. It had no doubt that, guided by that orientation, the work of COPUOS would be fruitful.

13. Mr. LOTFI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that recent international political developments should encourage Member States, particularly the space Powers, to move towards the goal of preserving outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes.

14. He briefly described the current space-related activities being undertaken in Iran, particularly in the context of implementing the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82) concerning the development of indigenous capabilities. Work was under way, for example, to establish an Iranian national organization named the Iran Space Administration. His country was also ready to host a regional centre for space science and technology education, which would benefit the developing countries in particular. It was equally ready to welcome a mission to evaluate the measures already implemented with that purpose in mind. Meanwhile, it had established an Iranian remote sensing centre and would host a seminar on remote sensing in Tehran in December 1992, in addition to two major conferences - one on remote sensing in Asia and another relating to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific - also in Tehran, in 1993.

15. His country planned to start operation of the Zohreh domestic satellite in 1995, which would enhance its communications infrastructure and drastically reform its telephone and television broadcasting networks, as well as its banking and health-care systems. Research and development activities would be carried out in order to develop satellite earth stations to be used as part of the domestic network.

16. His country, which often suffered severe earthquakes, had closely followed the work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator in the area of disaster management through efficient disaster communications. It supported the recommendations of the International Conference on Disaster Communications, as well as the convening of a conference in 1993 to negotiate an intergovernmental convention on disaster communications.

(Mr. Lotfi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

17. His country attached great importance to cooperation among the developing and developed countries at the bilateral, regional and international levels. In that respect, the United Nations Programme on Space Applications was of great importance and should be encouraged and supported. The transfer of technology, free access to satellite data at a suitable cost, and technical support could also narrow the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries.

18. Mr. CHINADE (Nigeria) said that the hope for a new world order created by the international climate of fruitful cooperation among States should include a firm commitment by the international community to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes.

19. In 1992, two important events relevant to the work and purposes of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had taken place, namely, International Space Year and the tenth anniversary of UNISPACE 82. International Space Year, which was designed to promote international cooperation in space technology, would in turn contribute to the realization of the objectives of UNISPACE 82, particularly in the areas of resource management, public education and the safeguarding of the global environment.

20. Nigeria firmly believed in the fundamental principles and objectives which had informed the establishment of COPUOS in 1959, namely that outer space was the common heritage of mankind which should be explored and utilized exclusively for peaceful purposes, that there was a linkage between its exploration and the maintenance of international peace and security, and that its exploration should open up opportunities, particularly in the area of economic development and the social welfare of peoples through international cooperation among States.

21. In that respect, Nigeria had been happy to note the progress achieved by COPUOS, both in the Legal Subcommittee and in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, since the last session of the General Assembly, particularly the adoption by consensus of the set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Nigeria was willing to support any concrete measures that would further strengthen that set of principles and minimize the risk of accidents.

22. On the other hand, after a decade of work in the Legal Subcommittee, no appreciable progress had been made on matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and in the character of utilization of the geostationary orbit. The time had come to resolve the issue definitively through constructive dialogue, bearing in mind that the definition and delimitation of outer space was a practical and legal necessity in order to have a clear distinction between airspace and outer space. That would put to rest such issues as concerns for security over national jurisdiction, as well as access to and equitable use of the orbit for development purposes.

(Mr. Chinade, Nigeria)

23. Similarly, if the principle that the exploration and utilization of space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all States were included on the agenda of COPUOS, it would provide an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate in practical terms how the benefits from space exploration could be spread to all countries, particularly the disadvantaged developing countries. There should therefore be a strong commitment to the progressive development and codification as a legal norm of that principle.

24. Nigeria was especially interested in implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 and was ready to host an African regional centre for space technology and science education. For that purpose, however, it would like to count on the international community and the competent agencies for adequate financial and technical assistance in order to ensure that the proposed centre was viable, responsible and responsive to the collective scientific aspiration of the African countries.

25. In the same vein, the United Nations space applications programme was most relevant to the developmental needs of the developing countries. Nigeria therefore endorsed the need to appeal to the international community for increased financial assistance to the programme, which had been remarkable in fulfilling its mandate, despite its worsening financial base.

26. The question of space debris was another area of concern to his delegation. He wished to reiterate that the issue could not be separated from the collective effort to safeguard the global environment from pollution. The fact that General Assembly resolution 46/45 had been adopted without a vote emphasized that it was a matter of concern for all countries. Space debris had now been added to the dangers already posed by the emission of toxic gases and chemical effluents into the earth environment. His delegation felt that the question of space debris should, as from 1993, be a distinct agenda item, which would then enable the issue to be discussed substantively in COPUOS.

27. There was growing awareness that space activities continued to produce spin-off benefits, bringing new techniques in various fields (such as industrial measurement, image and data processing, food security, water treatment). There was an urgent need to develop and strengthen international cooperation in that area, and especially to give the developing countries access to the resulting benefits. The major space Powers and technologically advanced countries should significantly increase their bilateral and multilateral financing for training and technical assistance programmes and engage in joint ventures with developing countries. The spin-off benefits should be disseminated quickly to other countries through trade, education, technical assistance and exchange of information relating to actual or potential spin-off technologies or other forms of technological transfer.

28. The favourable developments in the international environment would seem to indicate that the international community was on the verge of finding

(Mr. Chinade, Nigeria)

solutions to issues that had previously been insoluble because of the cold war rivalry, which, it appeared, was a thing of the past. Nigeria also believed that such new-found cooperation must be used to pool resources so as to reorient science, technology and technical expertise towards the development of poor, underdeveloped countries in a determined effort to help them enjoy the benefits of space technology. For that reason, Nigeria fully supported the convening of a third UNISPACE conference, at a date to be determined in 1995, to assess the gains made as a result of UNISPACE 82 and chart a course of action for the twenty-first century. The Committee should, at its current session, put in place the necessary machinery for preparing such a conference.

29. Mr. HODGKINS (United States of America), said that there was no doubt that the dramatic changes that continued to take place on the world political scene presented real possibilities for broadening international cooperation. The challenge was to seek opportunities to strengthen the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space as the chief advocate in the United Nations system for cooperation in the peaceful uses of space. That being the case, at future sessions of the Committee and its subcommittees, efforts should be increased to deepen the scientific and technical content of the deliberations and to avoid the inclusion of issues such as disarmament, which were more appropriately handled in other forums.

30. The past year had been a productive one for the Committee, as illustrated by the celebration of International Space Year (ISY), a historic world-wide effort dedicated to the spirit of discovery, exploration and cooperation among the world's space scientists, engineers, administrators and policy makers. It was in fact an American Senator who had launched the concept of ISY to commemorate the quincentenary of the voyage of Christopher Columbus to the Americas and the thirty-fifth anniversary of International Geophysical Year. In addition to the work done through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, concrete results had been realized through the Space Agency Forum on International Space Year, which had coordinated ISY activities in the field of earth science and technology, space science, and education and training. The projects included analysis of scientific data, conferences and programmes to interest young people and the general public in space exploration.

31. His delegation States felt that, though some real progress had been made in reforming the working methods of the Committee and its two subcommittees, the substantial changes required to render them more effective had not yet been made. It applauded the action taken by the Legal Subcommittee to improve its efficiency. In the coming year it would evaluate the future organization of the work of the Legal Subcommittee and was confident that the spirit of cooperation and compromise that had characterized the work of the previous year would yield positive results.

32. Regarding the principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, the United States had not blocked the consensus recommendation of

(Mr. Hodgkins, United States)

the Committee to submit the text of the principles to the General Assembly, nor would it oppose their adoption by the Assembly; it continued to believe, however, that those principles did not yet have the requisite clarity and technical validity to guide the safe use of nuclear power sources in space.

33. Principle 11 called for review and revision of those principles within two years, and the United States strongly believed that that would be necessary. It had voted in favour of the principles on the understanding that principle 3 would be revised. In fact, such review and revision should begin at the coming sessions of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee. In that way the Committee could ensure that the principles relating to safe use of nuclear power sources in outer space were technically sound and consistent with United States safety practices, which were founded on an approach that was technically clearer and more valid.

34. Mr. POSSO SERRANO (Ecuador) said that his country shared a common position with the members of the Rio Group, to which it belonged. He stressed that Ecuador's position had always involved support to any initiative intended to encourage international cooperation towards universal, non-discriminatory access of all countries to space technology and the advantages of the rational exploitation of space resources and the establishment of special juridical systems whenever necessary. Two fundamental principles were applied in that respect: outer space must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and the needs of developing countries must be taken into account.

35. The question of the geostationary orbit was a subject of continuing concern to the Ecuadorian delegation, for discussions were at a standstill. The question had been approached from different angles, but no effort had been made to change the substance of the traditional view. The geostationary orbit had a unique character and constituted a limited natural resource that could be exhausted. Irrational exploitation was liable to saturate it and close it to all further use, not to mention the fact that it was the source of considerable space debris. Certain major economic interests and multinational corporations had, in their desire for profit, managed so far to conceal the evidence, namely, that the geostationary orbit had special characteristics in that the plane of the equator offered unique possibilities for putting in place geosynchronous satellites.

36. Currently that resource was being exploited irresponsibly and irrationally. No account was taken of the special characteristics of the Earth's equatorial plane, and the interests of certain countries were totally disregarded. It was for that reason that Ecuador emphasized that a *sui generis* juridical system based on equity and international cooperation must be established to govern the use of the geostationary orbit and guarantee its exploitation for the benefit of all mankind, recognizing the needs of developing countries and, in particular, the special geographic situation of certain States. Only when such a special juridical system was recognized

(Mr. Posso Serrano, Ecuador)

would the international community be able to permit the equitable use of that resource and the rational enjoyment of its advantages, taking into account the situation of the equatorial countries, which was special in two respects - their geographic situation and their particular development needs.

37. As the question was juridical in nature, and in view of the fact that the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (1967) did not regulate the use of the geostationary orbit, his delegation urged that a political solution should be sought to the problem, and that initial responsibility for that task should be entrusted to the Committee's Legal Subcommittee rather than to the International Telecommunication Union, as some were suggesting, for the problem went beyond the use of the radio-frequency spectrum.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.