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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 15th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 25 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Goldea (Vice-Chair) ..... (Hungary)  
*later:* Mr. Kemayah, Sr. (Chair) ..... (Liberia)

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*In the absence of Mr. Kemayah, Sr. (Liberia), Mr. Goldea (Hungary), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 53: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space** (continued) (A/73/20, A/C.4/73/L.4 and A/C.4/73/L.6)

1. **Mr. Mohsin** (Pakistan) said that his Government, as a party to the five core treaties governing the exploration and use of outer space, would support the development of additional legally binding instruments to prevent the weaponization of outer space. Pakistan also adhered to the five sets of principles on the exploration and use of outer space, and was committed to its exclusive use for peaceful purposes as the common heritage of humankind. It appreciated the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in developing the international legal regime governing outer space and the framework for space governance, and believed it should continue working towards a consensus-based and binding definition and delimitation of outer space.

2. The wide technological gap between States must be bridged to ensure that developing countries, regardless of their level of development, had non-discriminatory access to outer space and its peaceful exploration and use. In that connection, COPUOS again played a critical role. It was the ideal platform for promoting technical assistance and technology transfer to developing countries in space-related activities that furthered their socioeconomic development and helped them achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. In February 2018, Pakistan had hosted the fourth International Conference on the Use of Space Technology for Water Management, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the sponsors of the Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water, where the discussions had centred on how space technology could improve water resource management, especially in the areas of desertification, water storage, and drought and flood monitoring.

4. In July 2018, Pakistan had launched a remote sensing satellite, enabling it to meet its imaging requirements in land mapping, agriculture, urban and rural planning, environmental monitoring, natural disaster management and water resource management. The Government was also considering an upgrade of its Institute of Space Technology to enable it to join the international network of United Nations-affiliated regional centres for space science and technology

education and would welcome an evaluation mission by the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. Pakistan had also begun training experts in the area of space law and looked forward to collaborating with Member States in that connection.

5. Pakistan supported all instruments focused on space debris mitigation. Emerging spacefaring nations, however, were mostly developing countries lacking in the financial and technical resources needed for full compliance with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of COPUOS and should therefore be provided with situational awareness and conjunction assessment risk analysis systems, as well as with assistance from advanced spacefaring nations for absorbing the costs incurred as a result of spacecraft design modifications. To limit the access of new entrants to the spacefaring world by setting overly high technical standards would be contrary to the provisions of the relevant treaties and General Assembly resolutions. Research, best practices, technologies and early warning information should also be made available to all stakeholders with a view to preventing space debris from compromising the harnessing of potential gains from outer space.

6. Pakistan had consistently opposed the militarization and weaponization of outer space, which would pose a grave threat to humanity and to the future of space operations, including by impeding progress towards their long-term sustainability. The international community had a collective responsibility to maintain the safety, security and sustainability of outer space in order to meet the needs of future generations.

7. **Mr. Lim** (Singapore) said that outer space should remain a peaceful and sustainable global commons. There were over 6,000 satellites in the immediate exosphere, and the number of orbital objects continued to increase as the space industry grew and miniaturized satellites proliferated. Steps must therefore be taken to address the growing challenges of orbital congestion and space debris.

8. International cooperation on issues relating to outer space was vital, and there must be increased consensus on international norms. In order to keep pace with developments in technology and geopolitics, international regimes governing responsible conduct must be updated and new norms established, in a transparent, inclusive manner. Singapore supported the open and inclusive approach of COPUOS and its subsidiary working groups, which allowed observers to participate in consultations, thereby building confidence and legitimacy. The Conference commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations

Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE+50) had served as a central platform for considering the future course of international space cooperation. It was crucial to continue working towards an open and inclusive international framework to ensure the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. His delegation looked forward to further discussions on the “Space2030” agenda.

9. Small States could play a part in harnessing and promoting peaceful outer space activities. His Government had established the Office for Space Technology and Industry in 2013 to facilitate economic investments from international space companies and to develop small satellite capabilities in universities and research institutes. It was also leveraging microsatellite capabilities to support its initiative to provide nationwide connectivity for public services.

10. Singapore was committed to regional and multilateral efforts to enhance international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space. Accordingly, it had partnered with France to research and develop space technologies and had actively participated in regional and international space forums.

11. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that the international community should act to prevent outer space from becoming the next setting for an arms race, since such militarization would be one of the greatest threats to the future of the human race, and a violation of outer space as its common heritage. Efforts should instead be directed towards the use of space technologies for disaster prevention and mitigation, environmental protection and human health. Adopting international legal norms that would prohibit the placement of weapons in space, especially nuclear weapons, was the only way to halt that threat. Cuba reiterated its appeal to all States to negotiate and adopt a treaty to that effect. While constructive dialogue COPUOS, its Legal Subcommittee, and the Conference on Disarmament could produce an effective legal instrument to prevent the militarization of outer space, the Conference must play the primary role, taking the Chinese-Russian draft treaty on the matter as the basis for its negotiations. Reaching an agreement on that issue had become all the more urgent, given the increasing frequency of bellicose statements by the highest authorities of the United States Government, who were calling for the establishment of a national space force by 2020 and the need for United States dominion over space. The highly significant UNISPACE+50 high-level segment, underscoring the achievements of COPUOS and the usefulness of space technologies in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, had also stressed

the need to preserve peace in outer space for current and future generations.

12. The geostationary orbit had great potential for providing access to space information and communications, which would help developing countries in particular to create social and educational programmes, share in knowledge and provide medical assistance. In order to guarantee its sustainability, the geostationary orbit must remain on the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee of COPUOS.

13. Although all States had the right to the peaceful use and exploration of outer space, that remained an unreachable dream for most developing countries. Greater efforts were needed to promote broader, more effective participation in space activities that would allow developing countries to leverage space science and technology for socioeconomic development. That would require effective international cooperation, capacity-building and non-discriminatory transfer of scientific knowledge, skills and technology.

14. Despite the cruel economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America, Cuba was placing greater emphasis on the space sciences and their applications, particularly for such peaceful uses as the forecasting of natural disasters and risk assessment.

15. **Mr. Kazi** (Bangladesh) said that his country, recognizing the need for a robust international legal regime to govern outer space activities, attached importance to the work of COPUOS and looked forward to seeking membership in the near future.

16. Bangladesh recognized that space science and technology applications could contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. His delegation therefore wished to remain engaged with Member States and relevant stakeholders in developing the COPUOS “Space2030” agenda and its implementation plan. Additional resources must be made available to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs so that it could, as intended, serve as a primary intergovernmental platform for discussing outer space issues, in the process allowing developing countries to indicate where their interests lay.

17. It was critical to bridge the divide in space technology between developed and developing countries in order to fulfil various internationally agreed commitments, including those under the outcome document of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Paris Agreement). With its vulnerable delta exposed to

frequent natural disasters, Bangladesh continued to reap the benefits of investments in space research and remote sensing, especially in areas such as disaster management, environmental protection, natural resource management and climate change monitoring. The Government was trying to foster economic growth and make public services more inclusive with the help of information and communications technology and was aware of how crucial other space technologies were becoming. The United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) must therefore be reinforced, as must the capacity of the United Nations-affiliated regional centres for space science and technology education.

18. With assistance from France, India, the Russian Federation and other countries, Bangladesh had launched its first satellite in May 2018, becoming the fifty-seventh country to join the ranks of spacefaring nations. His Government could now provide services to other countries in the region and beyond, and looked forward to greater cooperation with interested development partners in order to build local expertise as it continued to invest in peaceful outer space activities.

19. Bangladesh had consistently supported the call to prevent an arms race in outer space and to formulate an international legally binding instrument negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament. Transparency and confidence-building measures could play a critical role in promoting the security and sustainability of space activities. In addition, major spacefaring nations should refrain from any activities that would escalate tension in outer space.

20. Urgent attention should be given to mitigating the impact of space debris and minimizing accidents in space. Furthermore, the international community should ensure that Member States with limited capacity to explore outer space could participate equally in determining policies and establishing norms. In that connection, Bangladesh would welcome future initiatives to hold joint meetings of the First and Fourth Committees.

21. **Mr. Charters** (Observer for the Holy See) said that even though certain Powers had made use of outer space for military purposes, conducting experiments to destroy satellites and developing schemes to populate outer space with weapons systems, the vast majority of space missions had been for peaceful purposes, providing widespread benefits on Earth through space observation, communications and navigation.

22. Outer space was truly a common environment for humankind, even beyond the way the open oceans were. International cooperation was thus fundamental to

keeping outer space universally beneficial. His delegation was pleased to note that the International Space Station had continued to operate successfully with an international crew. The international community should learn from such cooperation and broaden it to include perhaps even more States or to involve launch systems of other States. He wondered whether it would not be better to combine the various national programmes working in parallel into a single, well-coordinated effort to expand the peaceful uses of outer space.

23. Artificial satellites orbiting the Earth must obviously be launched and operated in a way that minimized the possibility of collision with other satellites and space objects, which typically produced a significant amount of debris that continued to orbit the Earth and risked seriously damaging other satellites. States should give urgent consideration to devising some kind of “rules of the road” that would require a launching State to design the orbit of its spacecraft so that it would not conflict with existing space vehicles and so that its craft would be disposed of in a safe and responsible manner at the end of its life. With the recent development and expanded use of small satellites (CubeSats), measuring approximately 10 cm per side, it was increasingly important to avert collisions.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.35 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.*

*Mr. Kemayah, Sr. (Liberia), Chair, took the Chair.*

24. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolution and draft decision before it, neither of which had any programme budget implications.

*Draft resolution A/C.4/73/L.4: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space*

25. **Ms. Ramirez de Arellano y Haro** (Mexico), speaking as Chair of the Fourth Committee Working Group of the Whole on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, said that paragraph 32 had been deleted from the draft resolution, as the Working Group had been unable to achieve consensus on the issue and would revisit it the following year.

26. *Draft resolution A/C.4/73/L.4, as orally revised, was adopted.*

27. **Mr. Ghaniei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in explanation of position, said that because space security and the military aspects of the issue did not fall within the mandates of COPUOS or the Fourth Committee, some of the terminology used in the draft resolution, especially in paragraphs 10, 14 and 34, gave cause for concern, and would be interpreted accordingly.

Nevertheless, his delegation had decided to join the consensus on the understanding that the points at issue would be addressed in the future.

*Draft decision A/C.4/73/L.6: Increase in the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space*

28. **Ms. Sharma** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Albania, Armenia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Eritrea, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Namibia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had joined the list of sponsors.

29. *Draft decision A/C.4/73/L.6 was adopted.*

30. **Mr. Keçeli** (Turkey), speaking in explanation of position, said that his Government was committed to the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space, where COPUOS played a key role. His delegation was pleased with the growing interest in the work of COPUOS, which was why it had not requested a vote on the draft resolution. However, he reminded the Committee that the Greek Cypriot Administration did not represent the entire island of Cyprus. The Government in the south represented the Greek Cypriots, and the Government in the North represented the Turkish Cypriots, who were co-owners of the island. As such, unilateral applications made by the Greek Cypriot Administration to any international body or organization could not be considered favourably by Turkey until a fair settlement was reached. Turkey must therefore disassociate itself from the draft resolution. Its decision not to request a vote did not constitute a change in its position.

31. **Mr. Mavros** (Cyprus) said that his Government was pleased to become a full member of COPUOS and looked forward to playing an active role and working closely with other members of that Committee. His delegation was also pleased that the issue of increasing the membership of COPUOS had finally been addressed in a non-confrontational, non-politicized and professional manner. However, the statement delivered by the representative of Turkey compelled him to remind the Committee that international law, as well as the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus, were indisputable. The Republic of Cyprus was the sole legitimate Government representing the whole of the island.

#### **Other matters**

32. Mr. Hedman (United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs) said that the General Assembly would hold a plenary meeting the following day under agenda item 30, at which action would be taken on draft resolution [A/73/L.6](#) entitled “Fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space: space as a driver of sustainable development” following the general debate, in which he encouraged all delegations to participate.

*The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.*