

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)
17th meeting
held on
Thursday, 11 November 1993
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 84: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.4/48/SR.17
10 December 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 84: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(continued) (A/48/20, A/48/221, A/48/365; A/C.4/48/L.16)

1. Mr. RODRIGO (Sri Lanka) said that the new climate of international cooperation had created conditions under which the full potential of outer space could be developed as the true heritage of all humankind. It could play a positive role in arms regulation, disarmament and confidence-building rather than becoming an arena for confrontation.

2. Space technology benefited not only all human activities, but also the planet's complex ecosystem. It was therefore important to promote the widest possible access to such technology. Regretting that limited resources had restricted the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, he said that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) faced a major challenge in working out innovative and practical measures to ensure that space technology was available to serve all countries. In that connection, regional approaches were particularly "user-friendly" for developing countries like his own. Among examples of useful regional projects were the proposed regional training centres - and Sri Lanka had offered to host such a centre in Asia - and the provision of technical advisory services on space applications for a programme to develop remote-sensing projects for coastal-zone management and monitoring in the Indian Ocean area jointly with the Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation.

3. He supported the proposal to hold a third United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (UNISPACE). In view of its great significance, however, he supported the view that the scope and objectives of a future UNISPACE conference should be very carefully agreed on in advance. India, a developing country which had achieved considerable progress in the development of space technology, had offered to host such a conference.

4. Mr. RIOBO (Chile) said that, although views might differ on how to achieve international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, there was no doubt that such cooperation was compulsory and binding. As noted in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, one of the basic principles of the Charter was the duty to cooperate; and as stated in the preamble to the Declaration, outer space was not subject to national appropriation.

5. International cooperation was a recurrent theme in the relevant space legislation, which was why the work of the Legal Subcommittee on the benefits of space technology was particularly important. In that connection, the working paper submitted by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Uruguay and Venezuela (A/AC.105/C.2/L.182) provided an important basis for future negotiations on a non-confrontational basis, since it respected the ability of all States to create structures for cooperation, provided they were guided by solidarity and fairness. Fairness in that context meant "unequal" treatment for the unequally endowed; it was aimed at implementing the principle of legal equality embodied in Article 38 of the

Statute of the International Court of Justice in a world characterized by growing interdependence.

6. Space activities should be conducted in accordance with the guiding principles of space law, humanitarian assistance and international legislation on cooperation, their basic goal being to correct inequalities through the broad dissemination of information. The urgent environmental problems of the modern era required intensive use of the best technological means to neutralize the threats to the planet from the indiscriminate use of natural resources. The information provided by space technology would enhance security for all peoples. It therefore played a role in assisting humanity in general and was perfectly compatible with the new trends in international law.

7. In accordance with the concept of the common heritage of mankind that informed space legislation, the industrialized Powers should come to the aid of the more vulnerable countries, for example by providing them with information to help them combat poverty and attain a minimum level of well-being and development, as provided for in Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations. The right to humanitarian assistance must be seen against that background and from a long-term perspective, for if States did not have access to crucial data about their own territories provided by satellite technology, they could not establish the conditions for a lasting and stable peace in a world increasingly prey to global threats.

8. The Government of Chile, aware of the need for space cooperation, had organized in April 1993 the extremely successful Second Space Conference of the Americas, which had also been attended by countries from outside the region. The Conference had underscored the importance of cooperation agreements as the only possible means of resolving many of the problems affecting the countries of the Americas, especially environmental deterioration. The Santiago Declaration adopted by the Conference, establishing a secretariat and a schedule of future conferences, reflected the understanding that transnational problems of that nature could not be taken on unilaterally and required a minimum institutional framework. Mention should also be made of the appeal in the Declaration to the United Nations system through the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to provide support to follow up the Conference resolutions. He was confident that ECLAC would give that mandate the attention it deserves.

9. Mr. HODGKINS (United States of America) said that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was successfully focusing its efforts on serving as the chief protagonist for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space in the United Nations system. Its achievements showed that the principle of consensus could work effectively. Mindful that strengthening international cooperation in that field implied the need for the Committee itself to improve its working methods, his delegation and others had put forward detailed proposals to that end over the past decade. They were gratified to see that many of those proposals had been adopted. Of particular note had been the productive discussions in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, where space scientists and experts were playing a central role. On the other hand, more remained to be done on the question of working methods, particularly in the Legal Subcommittee. He noted a willingness on the part of all Member States to continue seeking those reforms that would make the Committee a more effective and efficient body in the United Nations system.

10. The spirit of cooperation embodied by the events of International Space Year 1992 had been a fitting celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's voyage to the new world and the thirty-fifth anniversary of the International Geophysical Year. In that regard, his delegation wished again to express its deep satisfaction with the work of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in organizing the activities of the Year.

11. Another promising sign for the future was the potential for regional cooperation. In April his Government had participated actively in the Second Space Conference of the Americas. He thanked the Government of Chile for organizing the Conference, which had had impressive results, and COPUOS for its support. The Conference had been an important achievement in regional cooperation, which COPUOS had been advocating since UNISPACE 82. Although the utilization of space technology to solve problems on Earth must be considered from a global perspective, regional cooperation held great promise, and COPUOS should explore it fully.

12. The current year marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of General Assembly resolution 1348 (XIII), sponsored by the United States and 19 other States, establishing the ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which had been made permanent in 1959. That resolution had established a clear separation between disarmament, which would be taken up in other United Nations forums, and international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, to be addressed in COPUOS. The accomplishments of that Committee reflected the wisdom of the decision.

13. In conclusion, he repeated his delegation's full commitment to helping make the work of COPUOS as relevant as possible to the ever-expanding opportunities for international cooperation in space exploration.

14. Mr. VERDIER (Argentina), voicing his delegation's support for a third UNISPACE conference, said that the next session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee should be devoted to discussing the theme of such a conference. He also expressed strong support for the activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, drawing attention to the rapid progress made on setting up a training centre for space science and technology in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

15. He particularly welcomed the inclusion of the issue of space debris in the Subcommittee's agenda, as Argentina had long advocated. It had on several occasions had the experience of such debris landing on its territory. He also welcomed the novel approach adopted in the proposal by the Russian Federation regarding the delimitation of outer space. Great interest had also been aroused by the idea of drawing up a questionnaire concerning aerospace objects (A/AC.105/C.2/L.189), which he was sure would shortly be approved. He further welcomed the ideas in the working paper submitted by Colombia (A/AC.105/C.2/L.192) regarding the geostationary orbit. Lastly, as one of the countries which had drafted the principles in document A/AC.105/C.2/L.182/Rev.1, submitted by Colombia, Argentina and its co-sponsors were committed to revising the document in the light of the comments received.

16. Mr. STRAUSS (Canada) said that incentives and opportunities for international cooperation in space activities had never been stronger and that

space activities constituted a privileged means of assisting development in many countries and of converting rivalries into partnerships.

17. In that connection, he referred to cooperative space activities in which Canada was involved, including a cooperative programme with the United States to develop a satellite-based instrument to measure carbon monoxide and methane levels in the Earth's atmosphere, and a satellite-based instrument developed jointly by the Canadian, French and American space agencies to measure the distribution of oxygen in the atmosphere around the globe. He also drew attention to Canada's contribution to the international space station project and to RADARSAT, a commercial remote-sensing system scheduled for launch in 1995, which would use synthetic aperture radar technology to provide data for resource management, environmental monitoring and Arctic and offshore surveillance. Canada was currently involved in collaborative data-collection efforts with several developing countries to investigate the potential role of RADARSAT in monitoring groundwater, desertification, natural disasters, oceans, agricultural regions, hydroelectrical developments and tropical forests.

18. Canada wished to express its satisfaction with ongoing efforts of Mexico and Brazil, with the support of other Latin American countries, to establish a Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in the Latin America and Caribbean region. His country was pleased to have been associated with the process of establishing the Centre, and looked forward to further progress in that regard. In addition, he hoped that as many countries as possible would join with Canada, France, the United States, the Russian Federation and 23 other countries that were active in the development of COSPAS-SARSAT, a satellite-based search and rescue system that had already saved over 3,000 lives world wide.

19. Canada had been pleased to note the decision by COPUOS to put the issue of space debris on the agenda of its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and welcomed the growing awareness among nations of the increasing risks posed by space debris in both the low-Earth and the geosynchronous orbits. Canadian experts had participated in technical studies of space debris and in developing design modifications for the RADARSAT system in order to protect against collisions with debris.

20. Canada believed the Secretary-General's report on International cooperation in space activities for enhancing security in the post-cold-war era (A/48/221) to be a thoughtful examination of important recent developments as well as a framework for a more efficient use of space technology to preserve and enhance international security and to promote the common welfare of the planet. The manifold benefits to mankind of the peaceful uses of outer space highlighted the need for enhanced international dialogue. In that context, Canada was pleased to report the convening in Montreal of a meeting of States members of the Space Agency Forum to explore potential cooperative endeavours and to discuss projects involving space education and assistance to developing countries.

21. Mr. DIMITROV (Bulgaria) said that the recent dramatic changes in the global political landscape had paved the way for further progress in international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. In that context, Bulgaria welcomed the decision to include the question of space debris on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

22. Bulgaria believed that the use of space technologies to address environmental questions should be, in general, a high priority of international space cooperation. He commended the steps taken by COPUOS and the Secretariat to promote the activities of the Committee and the Programme on Space Applications with a view to implementing the recommendations of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In Bulgaria's view, the Programme on Space Applications, whose importance had been clearly demonstrated in practice, should continue to focus on long-term, task-oriented education in space technology, as well as on specific applications. He hoped that the wide-ranging activities scheduled for 1994 under the Programme would enhance the application of space technologies and the access of developing countries to them. In that connection, Bulgaria supported efforts to enhance international cooperation in the development of spin-off benefits of space technology and welcomed the inclusion of that question in the future agenda of COPUOS.

23. With regard to the work of the Legal Subcommittee, Bulgaria shared the favourable view expressed by the Chairman of COPUOS and by several delegations that the Subcommittee had made progress at its latest session. However, he felt that the Subcommittee's efforts should be accelerated to keep pace with the changing times, including the rapid progress in space exploration.

24. With regard to the proposal to convene a third UNISPACE conference, Bulgaria believed that further consultations should be held in order to discuss organizational questions such as scheduling, level of representation and funding, as well as the agenda, in order to avoid choosing issues already discussed by COPUOS.

25. In regard to his country's efforts in the field of space cooperation, he mentioned experiments in Bulgaria concerning the effects on humans of long-term presence in outer space with a view to building closed-cycle life-support systems. In addition, Bulgaria was participating in cooperative projects in such areas as remote sensing, space biology and medicine, space communications and weather forecasting. Despite its current economic difficulties, Bulgaria planned to intensify its bilateral and multilateral cooperation in those fields.

26. With respect to the question of expanding the membership of COPUOS, he said that Bulgaria would support a limited expansion on the basis of equitable geographical representation and hoped that the question could be settled in a timely manner.

27. Mr. KYRYCHENKO (Ukraine), after stressing how important the role of COPUOS was and would continue to be, said that his country's emergence as an independent sovereign State had enabled it to participate more fully on the world stage. Currently it was involved in putting its space know-how, which was considerable, to peaceful uses. Specifically, it was working on the demilitarization of the SS-19 and SS-24 strategic missiles sited in its territory. The hope was to use the carriers for probing missions in space, remote sensing of the Earth and the development of space technology. Ukraine, as a world leader in remote sensing of the Earth, was directing its efforts towards setting up a national remote-sensing system for incorporation in the Programme on Space Applications. Work was in progress to develop a Ukrainian remote-sensing satellite, Okean-U.

28. Other satellites, such as Raduga and Geizer, were programmed for national space communications. Ukraine was developing its national Lybid communications satellite. Work was being done, in cooperation with foreign investors, on the Ariadna project, which consisted in a series of low-altitude global communications satellites. Ukraine also participated, both financially and scientifically, in several other space projects. On its own account, it was developing a space aviation system on the basis of the wide-bodied Mriya aircraft.