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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HOLOHAN (Ireland)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of Mr. Muthaura (Kenya), Mr. Holohan (Ireland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

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

AGENDA ITEM 83: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued) (A/50/20, A/50/384)

1. Mr. WANG Xuexian (China) said the United Nations Programme on Space Applications had laid a solid foundation for the exploration and peaceful use of outer space, especially by promoting the involvement of the developing countries and the international coordination of space activities. The past year had seen many successes in China's space programme, notably in the use of its new Long March No. 3A carrier rocket. China attached great importance to the practical applications of space technology, not only in the areas of manufacturing, energy, transport and medicine, but also in earthquake monitoring and prediction, crop protection and the monitoring of desertification. It was also actively promoting the use of military technology for peaceful purposes.

2. China continued to cooperate with other countries to ensure the peaceful use of outer space. It had hosted the Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Development in the Asia-Pacific Region in 1994, and had co-sponsored, together with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the European Space Agency (ESA), the International Training Course on Microwave Remote Sensing. China would continue to offer two one-year scholarships to individuals from developing countries training in the fields of remote sensing, cartography and satellite geodesy. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) appeared to have made no substantial progress in recent years. The military arms race in outer space might have slowed down but was still a matter of concern. China opposed all applications of space technology for non-peaceful purposes. It believed that COPUOS should continue to consider, as a priority item, ways to promote international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space while taking into consideration the needs of developing countries, and that it should submit a report to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

3. China supported the approach formulated by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to the increasingly serious problem of space debris; consultations on the legal issues surrounding that problem should continue. China welcomed the proposal to hold a third conference on outer space, on the understanding that thorough reparations would be made for it. It had no objection to using unrevised records of the meetings of COPUOS and its Subcommittees, beginning with the thirty-ninth session of the Committee. However, in the case of the Legal Subcommittee, any decision on the use of unedited transcripts should be reached through consensus.

4. On the question of the role and duration of session of COPUOS, no decision should be taken without recognizing its past achievements and the important role it still had to play in promoting international space cooperation, strengthening space law, promoting scientific progress in the developing countries and sharing

the spin-offs of space technology. China would continue to support the peaceful uses of space and space technology for the benefit of all mankind.

5. Mr. MAXIMOV (Bulgaria) said that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had made a significant contribution to the promotion of international cooperation in space activities, particularly in creating a sound legal basis in the form of various treaties and agreements and in establishing principles on broadcasting, remote sensing and the use of nuclear power sources in space. Bulgaria welcomed the fact that the United Nations had become a focal point for international cooperation in space activities, as it meant that all States could contribute to and benefit from them. Conditions were favourable for COPUOS to become even more effective, especially in responding to the legal problems arising from the rapid advances in space exploration and exploitation.

6. He considered it a major success of the international community that in the past decades ideological and military confrontation had not been allowed to seriously hamper international cooperation in outer space. COPUOS would continue to have an important role to play in minimizing the potentially adverse impact of space activities. Bulgaria supported the Committee's approach to the problem of space debris and the dangers of space objects with nuclear power sources on board. The new political climate also increased the chances of finding a mutually acceptable solution to the unresolved problems of the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit. Bulgaria shared the view that a well prepared third UNISPACE conference would be very useful in the attempt to resolve those and other outstanding problems.

7. Bulgaria believed that one of the primary challenges facing COPUOS was the need to ensure that all countries, including the developing countries, shared the benefits of space technology. In order to increase the efficiency of COPUOS, it was reasonable to carry out a thorough review of its working methods.

8. Bulgaria's space programme had suffered in recent years from the effects of the painful transition from a centrally planned to a free market economy, and the severe economic crisis; its national economy had also suffered from the strict implementation of sanctions imposed by the Security Council on other countries. Realizing that the only way to further develop its own programme was through international cooperation, which would also be the best way to contribute to the advancement of space science and technology for the benefit of all, Bulgaria had set up the Bulgarian Aerospace Agency (BASA) and made agreements with various other space agencies. It hoped to participate in future ESA programmes, and had signed an agreement with the Russian Federation on cooperation in the areas of remote sensing, environmental monitoring, telecommunications, navigation, manned flights and so on. He cited various projects and research activities in the areas of solar winds, biotechnology, radiation measurement and medicine that clearly showed Bulgaria's commitment to productive international cooperation.

9. Mr. VERDIER (Argentina) said that Argentina's space programme, which anticipated developments up to the year 2006, was of an essentially civilian nature and had a juridical and political structure which reflected Argentina's position on non-proliferation. Recognizing the undeniable importance of

international cooperation in space matters, Argentina had decided to make the data from its SAC-C satellite available to other countries and, in accordance with the relevant international agreement, had set up in 1995 the National Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

10. Argentina supported the establishment of regional centres for space science and technology, which would play an active role in the activities of the regional centre to be hosted by Brazil and Mexico, and intended to establish a link between the Mario Gulich Argentine Institute of Advanced Space Studies and the centre.

11. He agreed with other representatives that the working methods of COPUOS and its Subcommittees should be revised. Argentina attached particular importance to the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, because of the special interest it showed in the developing countries. He said that the third UNISPACE conference should not become an end in itself but should have a clearly defined programme to strengthen international cooperation in space activities, so as to avoid politicization of the agenda. Argentina supported the adoption of the multi-year work plan to deal with the problem of space debris and welcomed the high priority given to that problem by the Legal Subcommittee.

12. The question of the geostationary orbit deserved special attention as it was the orbit most used for peaceful purposes. Any definition of the geostationary orbit should preserve access to it and use of it in accordance with the practices of the International Telecommunication Union. The problem of possible overcrowding and the risks of collisions had to be carefully studied. As President of the Working Group on agenda item 4 of the Legal Subcommittee, Argentina was actively involved in those questions. It supported the initiative to compile a questionnaire in order to evaluate the scope of the current legal regime in outer space matters. Argentina did not believe the time was yet ripe to begin a review of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space (General Assembly resolution 47/68).

13. Mr. TELLES RIBEIRO (Brazil) listed the highlights of a year of intense activity in Brazil in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space. The Brazilian Space Agency was now fully structured and the Alcantara launching centre was operational. The first series of satellites entirely manufactured in Brazil, the SCD series, dedicated to environmental data collection, had proved to be a success, and their CBERS remote sensing project (a joint enterprise between Brazil and China) had made good progress. Development of the ECO-8 telecommunications microsatellites was continuing and development of the Brazilian Satellite Launching Vehicle had been completed. He emphasized that all Brazilian space activities were for exclusively peaceful purposes.

14. He considered that the Legal Subcommittee had made good progress at its thirty-fourth session on the legal aspects of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should be for the benefit of all States, particularly the developing countries (Working Group on item 5). He believed there was a good chance of successfully concluding consideration of the item during the Subcommittee's thirty-fifth session on the basis of the various working papers. He said the debates on geostationary orbit had clarified several outstanding issues. However, it had been premature to consider

reviewing the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space. The question of space debris was more pressing.

15. He believed that more resources should be allocated to the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. Brazil would continue to offer 10 long-term fellowships to individuals from developing countries for research and training in various areas of space science and applications. He was confident that the few remaining difficulties regarding the establishment of the regional centre for space, science and technology for Latin America and the Caribbean, to be co-hosted by Brazil and Mexico, would be resolved shortly. Brazil was in favour of convening a third UNISPACE conference in the near future; its success would depend on all countries, from developing countries to the major space-faring nations, taking an active part in the preparations for the conference.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.