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Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Thursday, 12 November 1958, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. URQUIA

(El Salvador)

Question of the peaceful use of outer space [60] (continued)

- (a) The banning of the use of cosmic space for military purposes, the elimination of foreign military bases on the territories of other countries and international co-operation in the study of cosmic space;
- (b) Programme for international co-operation in the field of outer space

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## AGENDA ITEM 60

QUESTION OF THE PEACEFUL USE OF OUTER SPACE (continued)

- (a) THE BANNING OF THE USE OF COSMIC SPACE FOR MILITARY PURPOSES, THE ELIMINATION OF FOREIGN MILITARY BASES ON THE TERRITORIES OF OTHER COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE STUDY OF COSMIC SPACE;
- (b) PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF OUTER SPACE

Mr. SANDLER (Sweden) (interpretation from French): The question of the peaceful use of outer space was discussed in the First Committee for the first time in January 1957, as has already been pointed out. The idea of the United Nations taking up this question was at that time submitted to it by the delegation of the United States, and it was a few months before the first Soviet Sputnik was launched into space; and already, at the time of that first discussion of it, I was able to express the satisfaction of my delegation at the American suggestion stressing the urgency to act immediately in this field. In the course of the negotiations that took place in London in the sub-committee of the Disarmament Commission, this same question was part of a group of proposals that touched on the different aspects of disarmament, and thus it was, in due course, brought to the First Committee in autumn of last year. But after the statements made in this Committee, we noted that the intention of the sponsors of all these proposals was, rather, to separate the point of outer space from the other questions contained in the joint proposals.

A few days after the historical launching of the first Sputnik in orbit around the world I spoke here. I at that time expressed the great satisfaction of my delegation at the idea put forth, and that was, to discuss this new question without our waiting agreement on the other points. That position has not been changed, and this was proved to us this morning by the representative of the United States in his point. This is a question which warrants being borne in mind as a very important aspect of our discussions.

(Mr. Sandler, Sweden)

This way of seeing matters was as timely then as it is now. If we wish to do constructive work in this field, we should try to avoid mixing up other questions of a more controversial nature with it. What I said in October of last year is applicable as well today. May I in substance repeat what I said then. We have to define very clearly the meaning of the term "outer space" as it is known. This term is not a very well chosen one. It should be more adequately defined. In other words, how far out is this space?

The discussion here has shown quite clearly that this question has not as yet been answered. After the statement that we heard this morning from the representative of Peru, who spoke as eloquently as usual, I express the hope that we will not be forced to apply to this question the multi-dimensional geometric formulas. The aim that we are trying to achieve is to be able to control flights of all types of machines in order to avoid having armed weapons and machines sent through outer space.

In this context, I said that it was necessary to think not only of machines or objects that might cover intercontinental distances -- today they would be interplanetary distances -- but also the question of rockets of medium range. May I add here that if we adopt this point of view, there is no convincing reason why we should introduce into the discussion of this subject the question of military bases at present established.

If a military base could be established on the surface of the moon, which is something referred to in military circles, it would be a different thing altogether. But the reason for the proposed study is obviously to avoid such a possibility, which today is purely theoretical. We do have quite a sufficient number of earth bases. But the miracle which is inherent in the fact that the American Pioneer managed to cover a third of the distance that separates the earth from the moon, makes it more and more necessary that we should urgently safeguard outer space against any military use whatever.

(Mr. Sandler, Sweden)

Last year I already pointed out that the more or less elliptical orbit of satellites should be taken into account when defining the altitude at which the words "outer space" can be applied. We have recently seen the difficulties in arriving at an agreement on territorial waters. Now we have to avoid similar difficulties regarding the sovereignty of outer space or the cosmic space, and among others, regarding the rights and responsibilities of neutrality.

It is a good omen that no protest was raised on the part of sovereign States against satellites crossing their air space. But this does not mean that a precise opinion and decision need not be established regarding the altitude where this space that we are referring to here begins, this space which for peaceful purposes should be as open and as free as the high seas. Obviously, much work will be necessary to come to an agreement on this point.

My delegation hopes that a decision of the General Assembly will be arrived at this year regarding this study and that we will be able, first of all, to achieve the aims mentioned on all sides, namely to encourage, to accelerate and to control the peaceful use of the space in question. In accordance with the declarations that I have made, my delegation recommends to the Committee the adoption of the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.220) of which we are one of the co-sponsors.

Mr. TINAUD (France) (interpretation from French): France is gratified that the United Nations, upon the initiative of the Soviet and United States Governments, is dealing with the question of the peaceful use of outer space.

In the wake of the outstanding experiments which have opened a new realm for scientific inquiry, the time has come to co-ordinate, under the auspices of our Organization, these promising efforts and to join together the research of all countries in order to make them serve the well-being of mankind as a whole, in keeping with the spirit of the San Francisco Charter of the United Nations.

A noble and generous task presents itself to the United Nations: the common interest of the peoples in these problems which will be part of the life of tomorrow -- if they do not already influence the life of today -- impels them to undertake without delay and in conditions best qualified to achieve success, a mission naturally within their province.

However, we are a bit alarmed to find that this debate, devoted to the peaceful use of space, is weighed down by two questions which perhaps are not altogether alien to it but which divert it from its essential purpose to which we must remain attached if, as we all wish, we are to achieve practical results within a reasonable interval.

The first of these questions relates to the banning of the military use of outer space. This is directly within the province of disarmament and should be dealt with in that framework, as already proposed by the Western plan of 29 August 1957 which called for

"the establishment of ... an inspection system which would make it possible to assure that the sending of objects through outer space will be exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes". (Disarmament Commission, Official Records, Supplement for January to December 1957, Annex 5, page 76)

This idea was taken up again by my colleague and friend, Mr. Jules Moch in his statement of 20 October. In that address, he called for the establishment within the Disarmament Commission of groups of experts, to one of which would be assigned precisely this aspect of the problem of outer space.

The second question which might well be discarded from this debate also relates to disarmament and touches on military bases. Those to which Mr. Zorin referred are, as you know, part of a defensive system -- I repeat, defensive

(Mr. Tinaud, France)

system -- which had had to be set up in order to assure the security and safety of the free world. The possible dismantling of these joint defence bases is surely subject to the disappearance of the threats which they are designed to meet. Is it reasonable to try to tackle this question through the bias of a debate which is supposed to be devoted to scientific international co-operation?

Whatever the importance and urgency of the two questions that have been raised, they should not be allowed to complicate the examination of the topic before us today. Such confusion would serve the cause of disarmament no more than it would serve the cause of scientific co-operation in the study of outer space. The swiftness of recent scientific progress -- which within the last few months has brought utilization of space squarely within the field of realities -- obliges us to examine the conditions in which this will be done without delay.

The substance with which we are dealing is entirely new and not very well known. We have to clear a path through virgin territory, to call for scientific and technical work which inevitably will open unexpected prospects, even while rendering uncertain knowledge firm and giving it a new base.

We can, of course, immediately exchange interesting ideas and set out juridical or philosophical considerations on this topic which appeal to the imagination and opens boundless prospects to it. We think, however, that in the present state of our knowledge a debate on the substance of the question is unlikely to lead us to practical conclusions. It might even have the disadvantage of inducing us to adopt prematurely principles which would not stand up under more thorough study. In our opinion, it would surely be more advisable to agree on the method to be followed. In our opinion, the job of examining all the data of the problem systematically and progressively should be assigned to experts. This means that at the outset the scope and limits should be determined, the inventory of international organizations within or without the United Nations which have already started studying these questions should be drawn up or else this would also include organizations which, by their proper competence, may be led to deal with some of the aspects of this matter.

Moreover, we should endeavour to clarify the possible province and scope of broad international co-operation and sketch programmes of research, of work of all kinds and conferences similar to those which dealt with the peaceful uses of atomic

(Mr. Tinaud, France)

energy. Subsequently and at a second stage, because experience has taught us that it is necessary to ponder such matters twice before we commit ourselves to initiatives, we might then sketch out the plan of an organization which would be charged with channeling this broad task so as to render these efforts more fruitful.

In the light of all this information it would then be necessary to extract the elements of a new kind of international law whose development would have to keep pace with the advancing utilization of outer space.

The task which I have just outlined might well, in the opinion of France, be assigned to an ad hoc committee. One might legitimately nurture the hope that, notwithstanding the complexity and multiplicity of the questions that would have to be touched upon, this Committee might well be in a position to supply to the next session of the General Assembly some proposals on the basis of which it might pronounce itself on the role which the United Nations would assume in the future in connexion with the peaceful use of outer space.

These few ideas suggest the position of my delegation with regard to the draft resolutions that have been placed before this Committee.

We cannot in fact pronounce ourselves in favour of the USSR draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/L.219 because, for the reasons set out at the outset of this statement, to tie the question of the use of outer space to disarmament would have the practical result of obstructing, for the time being at least, the development of broad international co-operation for the exploration and study of space for peaceful purposes.

On the other hand, the views and concerns of the French delegation are fully met by draft resolution A/C.1/L.220, which the French delegation has co-sponsored.

(Mr. Tinaud, France)

This draft, in our opinion, has a two-fold advantage. On the one hand, it makes it completely clear that the elaboration of international co-operation programmes must be undertaken without delay; on the other hand, it proposes that the study of these problems should be organized on the basis of a practical, rational and realistic plan.

France, for its part, would feel in duty bound to place at the disposal of the committee thus set up the results of the research undertaken in this field by its scholars, scientists and jurists.

If the United Nations were to decide in favour of this method, it would open a new path towards scientific co-operation among all countries for the greater progress and well-being of mankind.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): There are no further speakers on my list for this afternoon's meeting. There are only two speakers for our meeting tomorrow morning. As the Committee can see, the debate on this question is progressing very slowly, and it may be necessary to hold night meetings and even to meet on Saturday in order to make more progress. It may be that delegations are rather hesitant to speak in view of the importance and perhaps the novelty of the question before us.

There will be no meeting of the Committee tomorrow afternoon owing to the fact that one of the items to be considered in the plenary meeting of the General Assembly tomorrow afternoon is the report of the First Committee on the question of Korea, and also to the fact that there are no speakers for the afternoon meeting.

Unless I hear some objection, I intend to close the list of speakers on the general debate tomorrow at 1 p.m.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.