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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES  
OF OUTER SPACE  
Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee

PROVISIONAL AGENDA, WITH ANNOTATIONS, FOR THE SIXTEENTH SESSION

To be convened at United Nations Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 5 February 1979, at 3 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Statement by the Chairman
3. General exchange of views
4. Questions relating to remote sensing of the earth by satellites
5. Consideration of the United Nations programme on space applications and co-ordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system
6. Question of convening a United Nations conference on outer space
7. Questions relating to space transportation systems
8. Questions relating to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space
9. Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit
10. Other matters
  - (a) Review of the future role and work of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee
  - (b) Other reports
11. Report to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Note: Items 4 to 7 should be given priority in accordance with paragraph 48 of the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/33/20).

Annotations

Items 1, 2 and 3 - Adoption of the agenda

Statement by the Chairman

General exchange of views

1. Following the adoption of the agenda by the Sub-Committee, the Chairman will make a statement reviewing developments which have taken place since the fifteenth session and which are relevant to the work of the Sub-Committee. The general exchange of views may begin in accordance with the provisional schedule of work for the session, as approved by the Sub-Committee.

Item 4 - Questions relating to remote sensing of the earth by satellites

2. At its fifteenth session, the Sub-Committee continued its consideration of the technical, organizational and financial aspects of remote sensing, including a number of relevant studies on the subject which had been prepared by the Secretariat and others at its request. The Sub-Committee's views and recommendations on these matters were set out in paragraphs 16 to 71 of its report (A/AC.105/216).

3. The views of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the report of the Sub-Committee on this item are reflected in paragraphs 19 to 34 of the report of the Committee (A/33/20). 1/ On future consideration of the item, the Committee welcomed the intention of the Sub-Committee to devote more time to the item at this session (ibid., para. 19).

4. Among the specific aspects of the item requiring the attention of the Sub-Committee are:

(i) Classification of data for purposes of dissemination

5. The Committee noted that the Sub-Committee had continued its consideration of questions relating to a proposal for classifying remote sensing data into three categories - global, regional and local - based on spatial resolution (ibid., para. 21), and that varying views were expressed concerning the need and method of classifying remote sensing data particularly with regard to the above proposal (ibid., para. 23). The Committee also noted that a study had been submitted last year (A/AC.105/204) with a view to facilitating the discussion concerning the classification and dissemination of data, and agreed that the work initiated by COSPAR could be continued theoretically and experimentally to gather relevant information to relate different classes of data with various applications as well as further elaboration on the relationship of system characteristics, spatial resolution, and instantaneous field of view (A/33/20, para. 24). An updated study on the question, entitled "Characteristics and capabilities of sensors for earth resources survey" (A/AC.105/204/Add.1) is before the Sub-Committee.

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 20.

(ii) Co-ordinating role of the United Nations

6. The views of the Sub-Committee regarding the co-ordinating role of the United Nations in the area of remote sensing are reflected in paragraphs 60 to 68 of its report. The Committee endorsed the conclusion of the Sub-Committee that international co-operation was needed as the only cost-effective approach for acquiring the benefits of satellite remote sensing for the majority of countries (A/33/20, para. 28). It endorsed the view that in the light of the reservations on the issue of the establishment of a possible panel of experts, the Sub-Committee should invite members of the Committee and organizations which have observer status with it, to make known their comments on the usefulness of such a panel, on its composition, functions, time of establishment, if necessary, and on the method of reporting (*ibid.*, para. 30). The Sub-Committee had recommended in this connexion that a Secretariat report thereon be submitted prior to its fifteenth session to enable States to study it with a view to the taking of some definitive action concerning the panel of experts (A/AC.105/216, para. 67).

Item 5 - United Nations programme on space applications and co-ordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system

(i) Report of the Expert on space applications

7. A document containing comments of members of the Committee on the proposed United Nations panel of experts on remote sensing is before the Sub-Committee (A/AC.105/224 and Add.1-2).

8. The views of the Sub-Committee regarding the United Nations space applications programme were set out in paragraphs 72 to 93 of its report (A/AC.105/216).

9. The views of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the report of the Sub-Committee on this item are reflected in paragraphs 35 to 40 of the report of the Committee (A/33/20). The Sub-Committee will have before it the report of the Expert covering the implementation of the United Nations programme during 1978 and 1979, as well as a projection of programmes for the 1979-1980 biennium (A/AC.105/233).

10. In addition, the Sub-Committee will have before it the following reports:

(a) United Nations/FAO training course on the applications of small-scale remote sensing techniques to tropical forestry (Rome, Italy, 15 May-2 June 1978) (A/AC.105/222);

(b) United Nations regional training seminar on remote sensing applications (Nairobi, Kenya, 4-16 September 1978) (A/AC.105/227);

(c) United Nations regional seminar on the use of satellite technology for disaster application (Sao José dos Campos, Brazil, 2-13 October 1978) (A/AC.105/228);

(d) Regional training seminar on the interpretation, analysis and use of meteorological satellite data (Tokyo, Japan, 23 October-2 November 1978) (A/AC.105/229);

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(e) United Nations/FAO training seminar on remote sensing applications for agricultural resources (Dehra Dun, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad, India, 6-25 November 1978) (A/AC.105/230);

(f) Administrative and financial implications of the proposed programme for space applications for 1979 (A/AC.105/L.105).

(ii) Report of the Secretary-General on co-ordination of space activities within the United Nations system

11. The Sub-Committee at its fifteenth session noted with appreciation the report submitted by the Secretary-General outlining the activities of the various organizations within the United Nations system in the area of practical applications of space technology (A/AC.105/201). The report had, in the view of the Sub-Committee, usefully served as a basis for discussion of the extent to which the co-ordination of activities within the United Nations system in the area of the peaceful uses of outer space had been effected. It expressed its satisfaction with the manner in which the work of the United Nations system is being co-ordinated by the ACC Sub-Committee on Outer Space Activities, <sup>2/</sup> and expressed its interest in receiving further reports on co-ordination from the Secretary-General (A/AC.105/216, para. 121). This year's report of the Secretary-General is contained in document A/C.105/223, entitled "Co-ordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system: programmes of work for 1979 and 1980 and future years."

12. Regarding the two international centres for remote sensing established at FAO and CNRET, the Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Sub-Committee that they should be strengthened (A/33/20, para. 33). A document (A/AC.105/232) containing a report of the Secretary-General concerning the two international centres will be before the Sub-Committee.

Item 6 - Question of convening a United Nations conference on outer space

Action required

13. In accordance with the recommendation of the Sub-Committee at its fifteenth session, the Committee recommended to the General Assembly (A/33/20, para. 75) that a second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space be convened not later than 1983; that the Committee be designated as the Preparatory Committee and that the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee be designated as its advisory committee. It also requested the Secretary-General to circulate to Member States the report of the fifteenth session of the Sub-Committee, inviting their comments on the objectives and organization of the proposed conference, and agreed that additional time could be devoted to the consideration of this item (A/33/20, para. 84, foot-note 1).

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<sup>2/</sup> The ACC Sub-Committee on Outer Space Activities held its third session in Geneva from 19 to 22 September 1978. An oral report on the status of the ACC Sub-Committee in the light of the reorganization of ACC machinery will be made during the session.

14. The General Assembly adopted the recommendation of the Committee relating to the convening of a second United Nations conference as well as to the arrangements for its preparation (resolution 33/16, para. 10).

15. The views of Member States on this conference are reproduced in document A/AC.105/231, entitled "Views of Member States on the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space". Other documents will be circulated if and when they are submitted. In regard to the organization of work on this item, see the provisional schedule of work attached.

Item 7 - Questions relating to space transportation systems

16. In reviewing its future role and work, the Sub-Committee discussed other areas of research and applications of space technology, among which space transportation systems, which it recommended to be included in its agenda for this session (A/AC.105/216, paras. 147, 149). The Committee endorsed that recommendation and suggested that the item be included among the four items to be given priority at this session (A/33/20, paras. 47, 48). This recommendation was subsequently approved by the General Assembly (resolution 33/16, para. 6).

Item 8 - Questions relating to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space

Action required

17. Various aspects of the use of nuclear power sources in space were brought to the attention of both the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee which, in turn, reported their discussions to the Outer Space Committee (A/AC.105/216, paras. 128-142 and A/AC.105/218, paras. 16-17 respectively). The Committee requested the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee to include in the agenda of its sixteenth session consideration of technical aspects and safety measures relating to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space and recommended that the Sub-Committee should, unless it decides otherwise, create a working group of experts open to all its members to meet during the session and to report to the Sub-Committee; the Committee also recommended that, if necessary, the session of the Sub-Committee could be extended by not more than one week (A/33/20, paras. 49, 76). This recommendation was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly (resolution 33/16, para. 8), which also requested launching States to inform States concerned in the event that a space object with nuclear power sources on board is malfunctioning with a risk of re-entry of radioactive materials to the earth (ibid., para. 9).

18. The Sub-Committee has two documents before it on this item: a note verbale from Canada on COSMOS 954 addressed to the Secretary-General (A/AC.105/217) and a report of the Secretariat (A/AC.105/220 and Add.1), entitled "Questions relating to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space" containing replies from Member States to a letter addressed to them by the Secretary-General requesting information on the subject. Other documents will be circulated if and when they are submitted. In regard to the organization of work, please see the provisional schedule of work attached.

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Item 9 - Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit

19. The views of the Sub-Committee on this item are reflected in paragraphs 115 to 120 of its report. The Sub-Committee discussed in this connexion a Secretariat report on the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit (A/AC.105/203). Some delegations felt that the item should be retained on the agenda of the Sub-Committee's sixteenth session and that the above-mentioned study on the subject should be brought up to date as appropriate. The Committee recommended that the Sub-Committee continue to follow developments in this matter and report thereon (A/33/20, para. 50).

20. An addendum to the Secretariat study on the question, entitled "Physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit" (A/AC.105/203/Add.1) is before the Sub-Committee.

Item 10 - Other matters

(a) Review of the future role and work of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee

21. The views of the Sub-Committee regarding its work for the present session are set out in paragraphs 143 to 149 of its report (A/AC.105/216). Priority items for the session endorsed by the Committee (A/33/20, para. 48) and by the General Assembly (resolution 33/16, para. 6), are reflected in provisional agenda items 4 to 7.

22. In reviewing its future role and work, the Sub-Committee at its fifteenth session referred to the question of solar energy platforms in space, extra-terrestrial intelligence, including relevant aspects of radioastronomy, monitoring of the environment from space, processing of materials in space, use of navigational aids in space, space systems for search and rescue operations and transfer of space technology (A/AC.105/216, para. 143).

23. Under this item, the Sub-Committee will also have before it two reports, one prepared by COSPAR (A/AC.105/226) and the other by IAF (A/AC.105/207/Add.1) dealing with the progress of space research and highlights of space technology in 1977 and 1978. These are the fourth in a series of annual reports prepared in response to a request made by the Sub-Committee at its twelfth session.

24. (b) Other reports

25. Other documents before the Sub-Committee which can be included under this item are the following:

- (i) WMO Tropical Cyclone Project: Report by the World Meteorological Organization (A/AC.105/225);
- (ii) Fifth annual report by the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (INTELSAT) (A/AC.105/234).

Other documents submitted by Member States and the specialized agencies for the information of the Sub-Committee in the course of its sixteenth session will be circulated as received.