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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland)

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AGENDA ITEM 75: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE  
(continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 75: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE  
(continued) (A/43/20, A/43/562, A/SPC/43/L.5)

1. Mr. VERANNEMAN de WATERLIET (Belgium) said that the launching of Ariane IV in June 1988 had been a spectacular success for European co-operation in outer space affairs in 1988. The European space programme had secured more than half the satellite-launching market, which was estimated at tens of billions of dollars. In the years 1995-2010, Ariane V would be used for launching the European space shuttle Hermes.
2. At the end of October 1988, an agreement had been signed between the United States and the European Space Agency (ESA) to build a permanently manned orbital platform. The project, scheduled for 1995, was called "Freedom", and the European contribution to it, costing \$210 million, was named "Columbus". "Freedom" would consist of an American platform and Japanese, Canadian and European modules, and the shuttle Hermes would be able to dock at it to conduct experiments.
3. His Government's participation in ESA activities had been a cornerstone of its scientific policies for many years. Belgium had become the fourth contributor to ESA after France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy, and its expenditure in that area would increase noticeably in the coming five years, particularly through its support for the Ariane V, Columbus and Hermes programmes, from \$US 80 million in 1988 to \$US 131 million in 1992.
4. As a State member of ESA, Belgium was helping to make space technology available to the developing countries. For example, it was co-operating with the Republic of Zaire on a project to apply remote sensing to agricultural statistics.
5. With the technical assistance of ESA, Belgium administered projects on robotics and microgravity. Outside the framework of ESA, it was preparing to pursue co-operation with France on prolonging the SPOT programme.
6. His delegation welcomed the compromise reached on the Legal Sub-Committee's new agenda item and thanked the Austrian delegation, which had played a vital role in the negotiations.
7. The recent incident with Cosmos 1900 had highlighted the need for legislation on nuclear power sources. Although Cosmos 1900 had not caused radiation pollution, the high growth of nuclear power sources in orbit in the coming years would sharply increase the probability of an accident with a release of nuclear pollution. For that reason, Belgium supported the efforts of the Canadian delegation towards codification in that area.
8. In the future, the Committee should also examine the increasingly serious problem of orbital debris, which posed a growing threat not only to inhabited regions of the planet, but also to satellites, whether manned or unmanned.

(Mr. Veranneman de Waterliet,  
Belgium)

9. His delegation joined those countries that had sponsored working documents aimed at obtaining a better use of the resources allocated by the United Nations to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). Anxious to avoid a waste of time and money, but also for other reasons, his delegation had hesitated to support those proposals aimed at creating new supranational structures in the space field. With regard to proposals to delimit outer space or grant a special status to certain orbits, it was necessary to abide by the excellent principles set out in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967.
10. Belgium wished to join the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.5.
11. Mr. BOUKADOUM (Algeria) reaffirmed the need for the exclusively peaceful use of outer space. There was no other alternative for humanity. Full acceptance of the principle that outer space was the common heritage of all mankind meant that all peoples must benefit equitably from the exploitation of its resources. Unfortunately, the military uses of outer space had been given priority. Outer space did not deserve to become a new field for the politics of confrontation. Moreover, an enormous technological gap had been growing between States with advanced space programmes and the large majority of developing countries. International co-operation, which was still the most appropriate and realistic way to remedy that situation, must help the developing countries achieve a more equitable part of the benefits of outer space.
12. It was therefore essential to improve the effectiveness and, indeed, to enlarge the mandate of COPUOS. Recent proposals for the creation of a world space organization deserved careful consideration by the Committee.
13. His Government welcomed the adoption by the Legal Sub-Committee of a new agenda item on the legal aspects related to the application of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all States, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries. If priority was to be given to that matter, the creation of a working group of the whole should not meet with opposition, in so far as it would meet the concerns voiced and avoid a purely procedural debate. The work of the Legal Sub-Committee would be greatly facilitated if the Secretariat established a complete inventory of existing international legal instruments on co-operation.
14. It was unfortunate that the question of delimiting outer space had not made any progress. A distinction must be drawn between legislation applicable to the air space and that applicable to outer space, a matter of growing importance in view of the increased uses of outer space.
15. The need to establish a legal framework for matters relating to the geostationary orbit was based on an obvious physical fact: the geostationary orbit was a limited resource, and it must be used rationally. The definition of a legal framework must also make it possible to maintain the right of developing countries to use the geostationary orbit in the future.

(Mr. Boukadoum, Algeria)

16. Consideration of the risks of nuclear power sources in outer space by the two sub-committees must lead to maximum safety but should also contain ways of helping the developing countries in evaluating risks and legal protection.
17. Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82) had become a matter of urgency. In particular, the United Nations Programme on Space Applications still did not have adequate means at its disposal. The developed countries, particularly those with an advanced outer space programme, must make a broader contribution.
18. The Programme must give greater attention to training and to making space techniques more readily available to developing countries, and it could be more efficient if the Secretariat produced a study on the United Nations capabilities in that area.
19. The developing countries must have easier access to remote sensing in its numerous applications. That meant that access costs must be more reasonable, and to that end, international co-operation was essential.
20. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee had placed a new item on its agenda concerning the use of space techniques as a tool in fighting problems related to environment, in particular in the developing countries.
21. MR. RUDNIK (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that international co-operation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes had become increasingly necessary for resolving humanity's fundamental problems. For his Government, the prevention of the expansion of an arms race to outer space was a pre-condition for further progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. A growing number of States had recognized that a rational use of outer space, not for military purposes but for resolving the important economic and social problems facing humanity, could only be achieved if the international community marshalled its efforts. For that reason, the creation of a world space organization (WSO) was highly topical, because such a body would work towards broadening international co-operation in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes and would help all States to reap the benefits of outer space. It would also monitor international agreements on the prevention of the extension of the arms race into outer space. In that connection, particular attention should be given to the working paper contained in document A/AC.105/L.171, submitted by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the 31st meeting of COPUOS. An exchange of views on the organization's conception and the basic provisions of its charter would help bring about a mutually acceptable solution to that question.
22. WSO would in no way replace already existing structures for international co-operation in the area. The aim was to achieve better co-ordination of international efforts for more rational use of outer space resources, taking into particular account the needs and interests of the developing countries. The draft

(Mr. Rudnik, Byelorussian SSR)

charter gave reason to believe that WSO would be based on democratic principles that allowed for the needs of States with advanced outer space programmes and States taking their first steps in that area.

23. The proposal made by the Soviet Union to create a centre for international co-operation on the peaceful use of outer space and its inclusion in the WSO system merited full support.

24. His Government supported the proposal by a number of States to declare 1992 the International Space Year and to organize an international forum, perhaps a third United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, to evaluate the collective efforts of States to promote international co-operation in outer space and to take concrete decisions on the use of outer space so as to promote a comprehensive approach to the problem of international peace and security and to meet the economic and social needs of all States.

25. His delegation was certain that the positive developments in international relations, the initial implementation of the agreement on medium-range missiles, and the dialogue between the USSR and the United States would further the peaceful use of outer space and would have a positive impact on the work of COPUOS and its sub-committees.

26. Mr. MONTGOMERY (United States of America) drew the attention of the Committee to document A/AC.105/406/Add.4, which reviewed fully the national and international programmes conducted by the United States. An annual review of national space activities was an important element in making all Member States aware of the opportunities for international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and his delegation urged all States involved in space activities who had not already done so to submit their own reports to the Secretary-General.

27. His delegation welcomed the signing by the United States, Japan, Canada and the members of ESA, on 29 September 1988, of an agreement to design, develop and operate a permanently manned space station. It was the largest international scientific and technological venture ever undertaken. The space station would provide the focal point for space operations among the partners well into the twenty-first century and would serve as a stepping-stone for exploration of the solar system. The same date had also marked the return of the United States to manned space flight. The launching and safe return of the space shuttle Discovery has ushered in a new beginning in the exploration of outer space.

28. The United States was gratified with the unique contribution that COPUOS had made to international co-operation over the past three decades. His Government was pleased to note that the next session of the Committee would have on the agenda an item entitled "Spin-off benefits of space technology: review of current status". Consideration of that important question would focus attention on the current results of national and international space activities and would play a part in reinvigorating the scientific and technical content of the Committee's work. That was an effective alternative to the proposals advanced by others to establish a new

(Mr. Montgomery, United States)

international machinery for co-operation in space activities. It was important not to dwell on ways to duplicate or dismantle the COPUOS structure, but to seek means to strengthen existing ones.

29. Two milestones had also been reached in other areas at the last session of the Legal Sub-Committee. The first concerned the wide-ranging discussions on possible improvement in the organization and methods of work of the Legal Sub-Committee. His Government welcomed the growing recognition that an effort to strengthen the working methods of COPUOS and its sub-committees was not something from which the United States or other Western States derived any special benefit. Instead, all COPUOS members had a stake in constantly seeking to enhance the efficiency of COPUOS and its sub-committees and to provide for a business like atmosphere in which scientific and legal experts could work dispassionately to produce useful results. In that context, his delegation recalled the mutual understanding reached at the twenty-ninth session of COPUOS that strengthening international co-operation and the peaceful uses of outer space implied the need for COPUOS itself to improve, whenever necessary, the methods and forms of its work. There was a unique opportunity to make progress in that area by assuring a proper balance between the scientific and legal aspects of the work of the sub-committees. A second milestone was the selection of a new item on the agenda of the Legal Sub-Committee. That choice represented a very carefully balanced formulation that was intended to provide a basis over the next few years for a considered exchange of views on a central aspect of work. It clearly did not provide for the negotiation of a new international framework, as some had implied. Instead, discussions would focus on how, over the years, the existing international legal framework for co-operation in outer space had translated into practical steps the concept contained in article 1 of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, namely that all nations should benefit from the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. The United States looked forward to a useful legal discussion. Needless to say, a key element to the success of an exchange of views would be the extent to which Governments themselves came prepared to discuss the issues, which were intergovernmental and not susceptible to being delegated to outside experts or Secretariat staff.

30. His delegation did not believe that it was necessary to establish a working group before the members of COPUOS had had the opportunity to examine the item for the first time. Several proposals made recently proceeded from a mistaken assumption about the nature of the new item, which indicated the need to proceed in a cautious and business like manner. For that reason, his delegation strongly supported the Secretary-General's invitation to Member States to submit their views on the priority of specific subjects under the item and to provide information on their legal frameworks relating to the application of principle 1 of the Outer Space Treaty.

31. His delegation was pleased to note that COPUOS had devoted attention to International Space Year (ISY), to be celebrated in 1992. Recalling that the idea for ISY had originated with a joint resolution passed by the United States Congress, he said that his delegation looked forward to discussing ISY and developing recommendations for possible activities which might be undertaken during

(Mr. Montgomery, United States)

the celebration. In particular, discussion of the possibility of organizing a series of ISY conferences under the auspices of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications would be welcome. The ISY programme could, beginning in 1989 and continuing into 1992, sponsor several workshops annually, focusing on programmes for specialized scientific and technical education and training.

32. Recalling the adoption 30 years earlier of General Assembly resolution 1348 (XIII), submitted by the United States and 19 other States, which had established the basis for the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space as the only standing body of the General Assembly to consider international co-operation in that area, he said that the sponsors of the resolution had appreciated the practical need to separate disarmament questions relating to outer space from matters of its peaceful use. The First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament had been and remained the competent multilateral forums for discussion of the disarmament aspects of outer space.

33. Mr. ADEYEMI (Nigeria) said that his delegation, convinced that the common interests of mankind lay in the co-operation of States and the promotion of the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, was greatly concerned at recent activities in space which had military overtones and could only pose serious and grave danger to the security of all States. It was to be hoped that the United Nations would continue to broaden global awareness of the need to increase the benefits of space technology and to contribute to the orderly growth of space activities favourable to the socio-economic advancement of mankind, particularly in the developing countries.

34. His delegation, which had consistently placed a premium on the successful implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, had been pleased with the results achieved by the Working Group of the Whole, particularly the recommendations concerning long-term, project-oriented and on-the-job training in specific areas of space science and technology. It was important that the Space Applications Division should be involved in providing assistance to developing countries, and that its finances and personnel should be strengthened in order to enable it to satisfy the increasing demands from developing countries now in the formative years of their space science programmes. The geostationary satellite orbit was very important to developing countries, together with remote sensing and telecommunications. His delegation would continue to stress the particular interests of developing countries in programmes such as surveys relating to forestry, fisheries and geology. The type of assistance provided in this connection should be on a non-discriminatory basis. For that reason, his delegation was pleased that the question of remote sensing of the Earth from outer space would again be considered at the twenty-sixth session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee in 1989.

35. With regard to the dangers connected with the unplanned re-entry of space vehicles with nuclear power sources on board, his delegation welcomed the consideration of the principles relevant to the use of such sources. The Working

(Mr. Adeyemi, Nigeria)

Group on the subject had made appreciable progress and should be reconvened with increased allocation of time. With regard to the choice of a new agenda item for the Legal Sub-Committee, it was to be hoped that Member States would submit their views on the specific areas that should be given priority attention, and that the Working Group on the subject would be established at the twenty-sixth session of the Legal Sub-Committee.

36. He placed on record his delegation's appreciation to members of COPUOS for their co-operation with the Group of 77 regarding the theme for the special attention of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee in 1989.

37. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that his country's approach to the issues relating to outer space activities was based on the premise that outer space was the common heritage of mankind and that its exploration and development must be carried out for peaceful purposes only. The increasing militarization of outer space in the last 30 years was therefore disturbing, as the possibility existed that the development and deployment of anti-satellite and other weapons systems might create a dangerously unstable situation. The super-Powers bore a special responsibility in that regard. It was to be hoped that the relaxation of tensions between the two super-Powers would lead them to respect the call of the international community not to embark on the militarization of outer space. Agreements to reduce existing nuclear weapons should not serve as a prelude to the further improvement of weapons of mass destruction and their emplacement in space, which would be contrary to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, without derogating from the work of the Conference on Disarmament, was correct in addressing that issue.

38. International co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space had the potential to bring about greater trust between nations. In view of the limited resources of the developing countries, concerted international efforts were needed to enable them to acquire both the software and the hardware of space technology.

39. Remote sensing was an indispensable tool in Africa, where the economies of most countries were dependent on natural resources. Satellite imagery could be of great help in the prediction and prevention of natural disasters and it could contribute greatly to national development tasks.

40. His delegation, being of the opinion that remote-sensing data should be easily available to the sensed State agreed with the views set forth in the report of COPUOS that the commercialization of remote-sensing activities had resulted in a sharp increase in the cost of obtaining such data. There was an urgent need to address that issue so that developing countries could have access to the data at an affordable cost.

41. The pace of implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 had regrettably been very slow, owing mainly to a lack of political will. At the Conference, his country had supported the creation of an international space agency whose primary function would be to promote international co-operation in the



(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

peaceful uses of outer space and assistance to developing countries. It had subsequently been advised that in preference to creating a new agency, the Outer Space Affairs Division would be strengthened and given more resources. Unfortunately, that had not happened, and the Division was faced with impending programme budget cuts. His delegation therefore saw merit in the Soviet proposal which included the establishment of a world space organization.

42. The development of space law continued to lag behind the rapid progress in space technology. The Committee should pay greater attention to the definition and delimitation of outer space. Failure to reach agreement on that issue perpetuated the notion that space law did not have a well-defined area of application.

43. The Legal Sub-Committee was the most appropriate forum for elaborating the legal instrument governing the use of the geostationary orbit. The objective should be to ensure access to and equitable use of the geostationary orbit, taking into account the interests of all developing countries and, in particular, the concerns of equatorial countries, which should not be misunderstood as claims of sovereignty. His delegation was seeking the establishment of a sui generis legal régime for the geostationary orbit, given its nature and technical attributes.

44. COPUOS had an important role to play in the formulation of new principles governing the use of nuclear power sources in space. It should deal with all essential aspects, including prior ratification, safety provisions and procedures and liability for direct and indirect damages, and should act immediately to avert the prospect of space pollution.

45. His delegation supported the proposal to declare 1992 the International Space Year, as well as the proposals for holding a third United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, which would draw up an international agenda for the next decade.

46. Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria), introducing draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.5, drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 1, 4 (c) and 7. After reading out paragraph 5, he said that he hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

47. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

48. It was so decided.

49. Mrs. GARCIA-GUERRA (Mexico) said that her delegation, having taken part in the work of COPUOS and its two sub-committees, could not help but point out the very routine nature of the Committee's work, as reflected in the annual ritual of adopting resolutions which had little to do with the exploration and use of outer space. The resolution just adopted recorded an agreement reached since March 1988 to include a new item on the agenda of the Legal Sub-Committee, which for some was

(Mrs. Garcia-Guerra, Mexico)

a great victory but for others represented a major concession. It was regrettable that in drafting paragraph 5, the General Assembly had not been able to assert control over a subsidiary body and therefore to resolve the question of establishing a working group to examine the new item. It had been said repeatedly that in view of the situation regarding international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space, the procedures followed in taking decisions in recent years had enabled some progress to be made. However, her delegation noted that, while great strides were being made in the use of outer space, the work of COPUOS and its two sub-committees was subject to rules which, albeit unwritten, allowed a minority to determine the pace of progress.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.