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INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/33/150.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 32/196 B of 20 December 1977, decided to expand the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space by 37 to 47. In paragraph 3 of that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ascertain the views of Member States on ways and means of allowing participation of additional Member States in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and, after having received the opinion of the Committee, to report thereon to the Assembly at its thirty-third session.
2. The Secretary-General accordingly sent a note verbale to Member States on 3 March 1978 requesting their views thereon.
3. As at 1 August replies have been received from the following Member States: Austria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Indonesia, Italy, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela.
4. The replies received prior to the twenty-first session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space were brought to its attention. The Committee expressed its views on the matter in paragraph 81 of its report to the General Assembly, the text of which is reproduced in section II below. 1/
5. The substantive part of the replies received from Member States on the question are reproduced in section III below.

II. VIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

6. The Committee reported as follows to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session:

"81. The Committee discussed the question relating to wider participation by Member States as referred to in General Assembly resolution 32/196 B. In this connexion, it had before it a document (A/AC.105/221 and Add.1-4) containing the views of Member States as submitted to the Secretary-General. In the course of the discussion of this item, some delegations expressed the view that the wider participation of Member States in its work could be accomplished by their participation in the proposed United Nations conference on outer space. Other delegations felt that the membership of the Committee should be expanded or rotated in order to allow for such participation and that, in the event of any expansion, the interest of developing countries should be kept in mind. Still other delegations felt that through the expansion of the Committee last year as well as through the established practice of the

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-third Session
Supplement No. 20 (A/33/20).

Committee, participation by interested Member States has already been provided for without the need for further expansion of membership. Other delegations felt that a certain period of time should elapse for evaluation of the results of this expansion before a decision for any further expansion is taken. The view was expressed that the question of wider participation, as referred to in General Assembly resolution 32/196 B, required further reflection and discussion, and that the Committee might return to this matter at its next session in 1979."

III. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES

AUSTRIA

/Original: English/

/8 June 1978/

1. Austria welcomes the fact that Member States of different regional groups have repeatedly expressed an interest in becoming members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. This interest shows the importance they give to international co-operation in the field of peaceful uses of outer space and indicates, furthermore, that Member States appreciate the valuable and constructive work which the Committee has been able to accomplish in the past. Every effort should therefore be made to accommodate these interests, as additional requests for participation in the deliberations of the Committee can be expected in the future.
2. In discussing the modalities of how to meet such requests most effectively one will have to take into account that the efficiency of the Committee's work can only be maintained in the future under the conditions of a restricted membership. Only then one of the most important responsibilities of the Committee and, especially, its two Sub-Committees can be fulfilled: the task of drafting international agreements on the questions of the peaceful uses of outer space.
3. It might be worth while to study the question of introducing a system of rotation on a regional basis among Member States which could provide an appropriate way of ensuring the broadest possible participation in the work of the Committee. Arrangements for such a system could be made to the effect that only one third of the total membership of the Committee would be rotated every second or third year and could also include the possibility for re-election of members. Thus, adequate continuity in the work of the Committee could be ensured. Alternatively, or in addition, an introduction of a formal observer status for interested delegations might be taken into consideration.
4. The Austrian Government is of the opinion that these or similar arrangements which will have to be discussed thoroughly by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the General Assembly could effectively accommodate the wish for participation of additional Member States in the work of the Committee while at the same time ensuring future efficiency of its work.

BYELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

/Original: Russian/

/4 July 1978/

1. The work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, as one of the organs of the General Assembly, and its role in studying and solving a broad range of questions relating to international co-operation in this sphere are viewed in a positive light. At the same time the effectiveness of the Committee's work, based on the procedure of taking decisions by consensus, is ensured by its representative structure, which is formed with due attention to the principle of the equitable representation in the Committee of countries belonging to various geographical regions and with an eye to the interests of all States Members of the United Nations regardless of the degree of their participation in the exploration and use of outer space.

2. At the same time, States not represented in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space may, in accordance with existing practice, always obtain full information concerning the Committee's work from reports and other documents and may study the results of its work at sessions of the General Assembly. The replies of States to questionnaires of the Secretary-General concerning the main problems considered by the Committee, which replies the Committee subsequently takes into account in its work, represent an important form of co-operation; another is the possibility open to interested States of participating as observers in the Committee's meetings.

3. On the basis of the foregoing and in the light of the recent decision taken by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session concerning a new expansion of the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to 47, a further increase in its membership in these circumstances is inadvisable.

CANADA

/Original: English/

/22 May 1978/

1. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was established on an ad hoc basis, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1348 (XIII) adopted on 13 December 1958 and was made a permanent institution of the United Nations, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1472 A (XIV) adopted on 12 December 1959. In accordance with paragraph 1 of resolution 1348 (XIII) and paragraph 1 of resolution 1472 A (XIV), representatives of certain Member States were appointed to the newly-established Committee and it is noteworthy that each of the members then appointed still continues to serve on the Committee. Indeed, the Committee has been one of the most successful and effective United Nations organs, partly because there has been a continuity of membership therein and partly because there have been some implicit criteria (other than equitable geographical distribution)

relating to acknowledged expertise in advanced outer space technology and/or a demonstrated interest in the applications thereof. In other words, there is no doubt that the countries first named to the ad hoc Committee (and whose membership was later confirmed when the Committee was made permanent), as well as those additional members named in 1959, were appointed or reappointed because they met certain implicit criteria of the kind mentioned above.

2. In the light of this particular circumstance and in considering the question of how further participation in the work of the Committee can be facilitated, it is important that, in order to maintain the efficiency of the Committee, the concepts of continuity and "expertise" should be preserved to the fullest extent possible. Accordingly, it would be preferable not to convert the Committee into one with open-ended membership or one greatly expanded in size.

3. If there is to be any further enlargement of the Committee beyond that already approved at the thirty-second session of the General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 32/196 B of 20 December 1977, such an enlargement should thus take into account not only equitable geographical distribution but also the implicit criteria always present in the Committee's membership as illustrated by the fact that in the original resolution setting up the Committee certain countries were named, i.e. not elected, to the Committee.

4. Consistent with the above, and to keep any possible expansion of the Committee to the minimum deemed absolutely necessary, while at the same time providing the maximum opportunity possible to interested States to join the Committee, present members of the Committee who have not been active for some years in its work might be invited to consider whether or not they would wish to retain their seats on the Committee. In any event, in order to facilitate the "participation of additional Member States in the Committee", the Committee might wish to examine the feasibility of adopting a standing rule of procedure under which non-member States might be accorded the automatic right (as opposed to the "courtesy" right granted in the past) to address meetings of the Committee and its Sub-Committees in an observer capacity on specific agenda items.

5. As one final observation, the Committee no doubt will also wish to draw to the attention of the General Assembly at its next session the recommendation of its Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee with respect to the convening of a proposed second Outer Space Conference to which, in accordance with normal procedures, all Member States of the United Nations would be invited. At that Conference, each Member State would, as a matter of right, be afforded an opportunity to consider in a direct manner most of the issues normally falling within the scope of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

CYPRUS

/Original: English/
/22 June 1978/

The Government of Cyprus favours the expansion of the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space or the adoption of any other ways and means which would allow the participation of additional Member States in the work of the Committee.

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DENMARK

/Original: English/
/14 May 1978/

The Danish Government does not see a need in allowing participation of additional Member States in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

ECUADOR

/Original: Spanish/
/23 May 1978/

1. The Government of Ecuador is of the view that, if it should prove necessary for other States to participate in the Committee, the General Assembly should take the relevant decisions, as it has done in previous instances.
2. Given the importance of the Committee's work and the interest which various States not at present members may have in its proceedings, it would be appropriate to allow the representatives of such States to attend plenary meetings and working groups of the Committee and its two Sub-Committees as observers.

EGYPT

/Original: Arabic/
/4 May 1978/

1. Egypt, as it supports the principle of universality of United Nations membership, favours the broadest participation by all Member States - based on geographical balance - in the various activities of the Organization.
2. On the other hand, limitation of the membership of committees of a technical nature may lead to an increase in their ability to adopt effective resolutions. An increase in the membership of such committees should therefore be effected only after a study has been made of the work of the Committee and the scope of that work.
3. Egypt believes that this position does not prevent other States which are not members of the Committee from participating in its work whenever they wish, since United Nations procedures permit participation by any State in the deliberations of all committees and principal agencies of the Organization. Indeed, in some committees these procedures permit the submission of draft resolutions without regard to membership in the Committee.
4. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/196 B the membership of the Committee has been increased to 47 States. It is best that a certain period of time should elapse for evaluation of the results of this expansion before a decision for any further expansion is taken.

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GERMANY, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF

/Original: English/

/17 May 1978/

1. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany supported resolution 32/196 B of 20 December 1977 by which the General Assembly decided to expand the membership of the Outer Space Committee. In doing so, the Federal Government was guided by the consideration that the activities of this Committee, which deals with the political, legal and scientific-technological aspects of modern space technologies, have far-reaching repercussions and that the significance of these activities is increasingly appreciated and taken into account. This trend could be furthered even more effectively if interested countries, especially developing countries, introduced their ideas and potential into the work of the Committee on a larger scale than in the past.

2. The Federal Government welcomes the admission of 10 new members to the Outer Space Committee in accordance with the above-named resolution. It welcomes in particular the fact that the Committee itself has been called upon to address itself in principle, during its twenty-first session, to the question of expansion. In this context, the Federal Government would like to present the following considerations.

3. Experience has shown that subjects of a nature as highly complex as those of which the Committee is seized can be dealt with more successfully if the number of participants is rather limited. On the other hand, the Federal Government is fully aware that the rising importance of the peaceful uses of outer space goes hand in hand with a growing interdependence of States in this field. It deems the growing interest on the part of an increasing number of States to be an affirmation of the work of the Committee.

4. Consequently, the Federal Government believes that the question of another, third expansion of the Committee should be studied carefully and objectively. It would seem premature at this time to indicate individual countries or the number of possible candidates; suggestions, however, might be addressed to the Committee by interested States themselves. Here, the regional groups could fulfil an important co-ordinating function. Conceivably, one may want to take into account during these considerations the particular capacities or especially the needs of a candidate as far as the peaceful uses of outer space are concerned. Certainly, care should be taken to ensure a geographically equitable distribution of seats.

GREECE

/Original: English/

/2 June 1978/

The Greek Government maintains the view that, since the launching into orbit of satellites for space applications, the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has become greatly important and has focused the concern of many countries. Consequently, it supports the participation of additional Member States in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and confirms its keen interest in joining the said Committee in due time.

INDONESIA

/Original: English/

/28 June 1978/

The Government of Indonesia has noted the growing interest in the international community with regard to the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in general, and in application of space technology for development in particular. Such an interest can best be reflected through an increase in the membership of the Committee, an act which will also facilitate its work through the representation of a wider spectrum of opinion from the international community. Or alternately, members who express particular interest in a specific issue could participate in the deliberations of the Committee, including its Sub-Committees, on an ad hoc basis.

ITALY

/Original: English/

/16 May 1978/

The acting permanent representative of Italy wishes to recall the content of his statement on the matter in the First Committee of the General Assembly on 23 November 1977 (A/C.1/32/PV.42, pp. 68-70). In particular he would like to stress that in studying the methods to be used to allow interested Member States to give their constructive contribution to the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, special attention should be given to the need of maintaining the efficiency of the Committee as well as ensuring the principal participation of those Member States who have acquired effective experience in the field of outer space.

KUWAIT

/Original: English/

/31 March 1978/

1. Activities in outer space are capturing world attention. Developing countries are becoming more active in this field. The benefits to be obtained from activities in outer space become more apparent each day.

2. Kuwait therefore is in favour of a limited increase in the membership of the Committee to allow developing countries to make a larger contribution in this field and gain greater access to space technology. At the same time, Kuwait believes that the membership of the Committee should not become too large to such an extent so as to make its work unmanageable and its proceedings unproductive.

NETHERLANDS

/Original: English/

/23 May 1978/

1. The Netherlands Government is fully convinced of the growing importance for the whole of the international community of the exploration and the use of outer space and the consequent technological know-how.

2. On that account the Netherlands Government attaches great importance to create the possibility for all States, including those that do not sit in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to make their views known on the subjects that are treated in this Committee. The most appropriate forum thereto is considered by the Government to be the yearly debate on the peaceful uses of the outer space in the First Committee of the General Assembly. Besides this possibility, non-represented States could be given the opportunity to participate in the General debate of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

PERU

/Original: Spanish/

/30 May 1978/

The Peruvian delegation has stated on a previous occasion that the General Assembly, which established the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, has the right to take decisions concerning its membership and an increase in its size. The Permanent Mission of Peru wishes at this time to add that, until the General Assembly takes such a decision, the Committee should facilitate the participation of other States Members of the United Nations as observers with the right to speak.

PHILIPPINES

/Original: English/

/11 May 1978/

It is the view of the Philippine Government that it would be desirable to further expand the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to accommodate additional developing countries. Greater participation of developing countries in the work of the Committee would be one way of overcoming the lag in space applications vis-à-vis developing countries for the same purposes recognized in paragraphs 100-104 of the report of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee on the work of its fifteenth session (A/AC.105/216) and which is the main justification for the proposal to convene a United Nations Conference on Outer Space matters.

SEYCHELLES

/Original: English/

/13 April 1978/

Having no first-hand knowledge of the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space or direct involvement in outer space programmes, Seychelles regrets that it feels unable to suggest ways and means of allowing the participation of additional Member States in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

SIERRA LEONE

/Original: English/

/22 May 1978/

The Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone believes that in view of the great advantages to be derived from outer space activities, especially by developing nations, there is the need for an increase of the membership of this Committee.

TURKEY

/Original: English/

/10 May 1978/

1. The wish of a growing number of countries to become members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is due to the fact that outer space research and its practical applications offer most promising possibilities in the improvement of social and economic conditions of all nations. The Turkish

Government believes that there is a need for certain arrangements with a view to accommodating this legitimate wish for wider participation in the work of the Committee. However, in the view of the Turkish Government, this Committee should be of a manageable size if it is to remain as an effective organ. Therefore, if the membership of the Committee is to be further expanded, a body of 54, as is the case with the Economic and Social Council, may prove useful.

2. In this connexion, consideration should be given to the possibility of a rotation system of membership with the possibility of re-election in the Outer Space Committee. A system of rotation, with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical representation, would offer an opportunity to all the Member States of the United Nations to acquire membership at certain intervals in the Committee, and would thus forestall constant increases in the number of its members, which would inevitably reduce its effectiveness.

UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

/Original: Russian/

/31 May 1978/

1. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space rightly enjoys the reputation of being a businesslike and effective organ of the General Assembly. The key to the effectiveness of the Committee, which adopts all its decisions by consensus, is its representative membership based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution coupled with due consideration of the interests both of States directly engaged in the exploration and use of outer space and of States which are not yet taking part in space activities. This approach to the composition of the Committee, which was adopted at the time of its establishment in 1959, has been adhered to ever since as new members have been added to the Committee.

2. The most recent decision to increase the membership of the Committee was taken by the General Assembly in December 1977 (resolution 32/196 B), when 10 new States representing all the regional groups were added. As a result, the Committee consists at the present time of 47 States, nearly one third of the membership of the United Nations. It would seem that at this stage there is no need whatsoever for any further increase in the membership of the Committee. This view is based on the following consideration: firstly, the existing membership of the Committee makes it possible to take full account of the interests of States from the standpoint both of their geographical distribution and of their participation in space activities; secondly, the existing size of the Committee should be regarded as a maximum inasmuch as any further increase in the membership of the Committee and consequently of its subsidiary organs would require them to hold longer sessions and thus have the effect of complicating their procedures and increasing their expenditures, which could ultimately have an impact on the effectiveness of their work in general.

3. It should be borne in mind that States which are not members of the Committee have ample opportunity to familiarize themselves with the results of its work through its reports and working documents and to participate in the discussion of

those reports and documents during General Assembly sessions. The Secretary-General of the United Nations regularly requests the views of all States on the main topics considered by the Committee (for example, the question of convening a new United Nations conference on outer space). The replies of States to such requests by the Secretary-General are carefully studied by the Committee and are taken into account in its work. Finally, States which take a special interest in the work of the Committee are afforded the opportunity to participate in its meetings as observers.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

/Original: English/

/16 June 1978/

1. The United Kingdom Government has noted and welcomes the increasing interest which is being shown in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
2. While willing to consider all forms of participation, the United Kingdom Government believes that momentum can best be maintained in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space if its membership is restricted to a moderate size. In this respect, the United Kingdom believes that the existing membership of the Committee is the largest which can deal effectively, and on a basis of assured continuity of participation, with the subjects within the Committee's competence.
3. The United Kingdom Government also considers that as only four months have elapsed since the membership of the Committee was increased by 10 members, it would be inappropriate to consider further changes in the Committee's structure at this time.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

/Original: English/

/13 June 1978/

The United States believes that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space functions best as a body of limited size, thus ensuring its continuing effectiveness as a technical organ. Any proposed enlargement or other change of membership of the Committee requires careful study and deliberation, a process in which the United States Government is currently engaged. As part of this process, we plan to consult with other members of the Outer Space Committee at the 26 June-7 July meeting of that group. The results of our deliberations will be made known to you as soon as possible.

VENEZUELA

[Original: Spanish]

[22 May 1978]

The Government of Venezuela feels that greater representation and active participation of developing countries in the work of the Committee can only have a positive impact on future advances in the exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of the international community.