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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 50th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BOATEN (Ghana)

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77-73297

Distr. GENERAL  
A/C.1/32/PV.50  
2 December 1977

ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 35 AND 36 (continued)

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE  
PREPARATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE USE BY STATES OF ARTIFICIAL EARTH SATELLITES FOR DIRECT TELEVISION BROADCASTING: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE  
(A/32/20; A/C.1/32/L.39 and Corr.1, L.40, L.41 and Corr.1, L.43/Rev.1)

The CHAIRMAN: This afternoon the Committee will take decisions on the draft resolutions under the agenda items relating to outer space.

We shall first take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.39 and Corr.1, the text of which appears on pages 7 and 8 of the Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/32/20) and pertains to agenda items 35 and 36. The draft resolution has no financial implications.

A wish has been expressed that the draft resolution be adopted by consensus, and if I hear no objection I shall take it that it is so decided.

The draft resolution was adopted.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee will now take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.40, which also pertains to agenda items 35 and 36.

This draft resolution has financial implications, which are set forth in document A/C.1/32/L.41 and Corr.1. It is sponsored by 35 delegations and was introduced by the representative of Austria on 30 November 1977.

The sponsors of this draft resolution have expressed the wish that it be adopted by consensus, and if I hear no objection I shall take it that it is so decided.

The draft resolution was adopted.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee will now take a decision on the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1, pertaining to agenda item 35. The draft resolution has no financial implications.

It is sponsored by 30 delegations and was introduced by the representative of Ecuador on 30 November 1977.

I shall now call on those delegations wishing to explain their votes before the vote.

Mr. REIS (United States of America): The United States will abstain in the vote on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1, which seeks to enlarge to 47 the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. We regret that delegations were not generally willing to allow the Outer Space Committee itself to offer its views before taking a decision on this matter.

The desire of States to join the Outer Space Committee is clear evidence of the importance of the Committee and the high merit of the work it accomplished. Nevertheless, as we have sought to explain, we are concerned that the work of the Committee may be impeded by this further enlargement, which the United States would regret.

Mr. KAJAL (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation felt happy yesterday when Austria withdrew its draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.40, and when also Colombia and other sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43 modified their original draft so that it could be acceptable to different opinions in the Committee. My delegation would have preferred, however, that the draft in document A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1 be adopted by consensus. As it is the practice of the Outer Space Committee to adopt measures by consensus, it is my delegation's belief that the draft resolution also should be adopted by consensus.

My delegation is in favour of the draft resolution, but I believe that it is possible to adopt it by consensus so as not to polarize opinions in the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: No other representative wishes to explain his vote before the vote.

I shall now call on the representative of Iraq who wishes to make a statement at this stage.

Mr. KUBBA (Iraq): My delegation and many other delegations were full of hope that the revised text of draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43 would be carried by consensus in this Committee, especially after the development which took place yesterday. In fact, this aim of reaching the desirable consensus was the major motive behind the extensive negotiations between the sponsors of draft resolutions A/C.1/32/L.42 and A/C.1/32/L.43 respectively.

In this respect we cannot fail but express our appreciation and gratitude for the tremendous efforts of the representative of Austria, Mr. Jankowitsch, to find a compromise formula acceptable to all parties.

We appeal at this moment to all concerned, especially those who stressed their attachment to the concept of consensus in matters relating to outer space to associate themselves with the overwhelming majority of member delegations and not to press for a vote.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution in document A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1.

The delegations of Canada, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America have asked for a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Surinam, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: None.

Abstaining: Australia, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The draft resolution was adopted by 95 votes to none, with 13 abstentions.

The CHAIRMAN: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their vote after the vote.

Mr. EDMONDS (Canada): The Canadian delegation abstained in the vote on the draft resolution in document A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1 which has just been adopted by this Committee. The Canadian delegation was not able to support this draft resolution for a number of reasons, most particularly because the sponsors of the draft resolution in document A/C.1/32/L.43 did not take sufficiently into account the views of those delegations which had been supporting the draft resolution in document A/C.1/32/L.42 prior to its withdrawal by the delegation of Austria.

The Canadian delegation is certainly not opposed in principle to an expansion of the Committee. However, as this Committee has been conspicuously one of the most successful and productive Committees within the United Nations system, the Canadian delegation remains concerned that its work should continue to be conducted in the most effective manner. Specifically, the objectives of those supporting the draft resolution in document A/C.1/32/L.43 could have been accomplished without having to recommend that the membership of the Committee be increased immediately by the arbitrary number of 10. While fully in conformity with the principle of equitable geographical distribution, wider participation in the work of the Committee could have been accomplished by establishing criteria for membership so as to ensure that the Committee would include representation from countries which have advanced space technology, as well as those countries which have demonstrated an interest in the applications thereof. Additionally, before any enlargement took place, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space could have examined all outstanding applications in the light of the criteria mentioned above, as well as through the adoption of such other procedures as a rationalization of the present membership of the Committee, so that the Committee's recommendation could then have been brought forward to the thirty-third session of the General Assembly for final consideration.

For all of these reasons, the Canadian delegation was not able to support the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. ELIAV (Israel): My delegation has voted in favour of the draft resolution in document A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1 because it supports the participation of additional States in the work of the Committee, as we stated in our intervention in the debate. However, we should like to reaffirm that we still believe that this goal could best be achieved by the introduction of the principle of rotation into the membership of the Committee.

(Mr. Eliav, Israel)

We hope that this view, which has been expressed also by other delegations in our deliberations, will be reflected in due course in the report of the Secretary-General under operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution and that the principle of rotation will form the basis of further action by the General Assembly on the composition of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Mr. SIKAULU (Zambia): My delegation voted in favour of the draft resolution in document A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1 because, firstly, the objective of the immediate expansion of the Outer Space Committee has been realized. In our view it would have been unfair and indeed unjust to prevent a decision by the General Assembly at this session on enlargement of the Outer Space Committee. Therefore, this Committee has properly acted in response to the legitimate aspirations of a number of Member States to join the Outer Space Committee and thus to make their contribution with the same rights and duties as the present members of that Committee.

Secondly, we voted in favour of the draft resolution because we took into account the fact that it was a compromise text arrived at after long and difficult negotiations. I must now indicate that my delegation has serious reservations with regard to operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution just adopted.

In the course of the general debate we heard startling statements seeking to block the expansion of the Outer Space Committee and in fact to preserve it as an exclusive club. This we find unacceptable. The authority of the General Assembly, in our view, must not be subordinated to the whims of a committee which is itself but a creature of the General Assembly. Specifically, our reservations relate to a phrase in paragraph 3 which reads: "after having received the opinion of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space". We hope this is not another attempt to give the Committee any veto powers regarding future expansion of the Committee as may be desirable. I think that one organ of the United Nations where certain Member States enjoy veto powers is enough.

Mr. OXLEY (Australia): It was with regret that my delegation abstained on the draft resolution. It is not that my delegation was opposed in principle to expansion of the Outer Space Committee. It is not that my delegation denies the principle that the General Assembly is the sole authority which has the responsibility for expanding its subsidiary bodies. Indeed, in my delegation's view there is no question that the only body which can expand subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly is the Assembly itself.

However, our concern, which led to our reluctantly abstaining, was the fact that, in my delegation's view, we in the Assembly did not really have sufficient time to consider what means might most effectively result in the Committee allowing the participation and reflecting the views of States which are interested in the Committee's work.

If, as the representative of the delegation that occupies the chairmanship of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee, I could conclude my remarks on a cheerful note, I should like, on behalf of my delegation and in anticipation, to welcome to the Outer Space Committee whichever ten Members may be chosen.

Mr. PAWLAK (Poland): The Polish delegation abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1, not because we are against the expansion of membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, but because we are of the opinion that such an important matter should be decided in a serious way, not in a rush, as was the case with resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1.

My delegation has already stated its support for the approach in resolution A/C.1/32/L.42, originally introduced by Austria. We are ready and willing to contribute further to the important work done by the Outer Space Committee, and we are willing also to co-operate with all countries which have an interest in the work of that Committee and would like to participate in and contribute to that work.

Mr. FADHLI (Democratic Yemen): Had my delegation been present, it would have voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1.

Mr. ABDEL-RAHMAN (Sudan): As we said in our statement the other day, we were in favour of the expansion of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Unfortunately, my delegation was not present during the voting. Had we been present, we would have voted in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. DAYRELL de LIMA (Brazil) (interpretation from French): My delegation, as it announced that it would in the general debate, voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1. When it was first circulated we were already prepared to vote for it since our delegation fully agreed with the idea of a restructuring of the Outer Space Committee with a view to expanding it and admitting new members. We had hoped that the quite lengthy conversations which have been held might have produced a consensus acceptance of this enlargement of membership. Since my delegation is one of the officers of the Outer Space Committee, we should like to bid welcome at this stage to those countries which, on an equitable basis, are going to be chosen to participate in the work of the Outer Space Committee and its Sub-Committees.

Mr. PALMA (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): May I be permitted to say that my delegation regrets that the draft resolution should not have been adopted by consensus. We voted for it essentially for reasons of principle. In other words, it is in fact up to the Assembly to decide on the composition of its Committees, and these decisions of the General Assembly, in our view, are always carefully thought-out decisions.

In the light of this priority and decisive criterion, we understand that some of the statements to the effect that the efficiency of the Committee must be maintained should have been the object of criticism or comment by delegations, but we are convinced that the efficiency of the Committee will in no way suffer as the result of the entry of new members that have shown such a keen interest in participating in its work.

(Mr. Palma, Peru)

This interest has been endorsed by the international community, as is shown by the vote cast this afternoon.

With regard to operative paragraph 3, my delegation believes that it cannot be considered that this makes it possible for the opinion of the Committee to prejudice in any way the view or the final decision of the Assembly on this important point.

Mr. DORJEE (Bhutan): I just wish to say that had my delegation been present during the vote on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1 we would have voted in favour.

Mr. GEORGE (Botswana): My delegation was absent during the vote on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1. Had it been present, we would have voted in favour of that draft resolution.

Mr. ABADILLA (Philippines): I should just like to say that I was not in the room when the vote was taken and that the Philippines would have voted in favour of the proposal had I been present.

Mr. OAISA (Papua New Guinea): My delegation was not present when the voting took place on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1. I should simply like to state that had we been present we would have voted in favour of the draft resolution.

The CHAIRMAN: Note has been taken of how the various delegations would have voted had they been present when the vote was taken on draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1.

Mr. ZEA (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): I wish to make a brief statement on the results of the discussion relating to the draft resolution which we have just adopted.

(Mr. Zea, Colombia)

First of all, it is very strange that the delegations which abstained here in the vote on this draft resolution have also said that they had no basic objection to an increase in the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

If that is the spirit in which they followed the discussions in the Committee, then we fail to see how three members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space could this afternoon have broken the tradition of consensus of that Committee.

The truth is that this practice, has always existed and has been a source of pride for the members of the Committee. I believe that is why the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Jankowitsch, did everything in his power to see whether we could not reach agreement after a number of delegations proposed extension of the membership, delegations which had not had this intention in mind only recently. Long ago, in past meetings, we tried to have the membership increased, but many of the member States thought we should leave the matter until the following year.

Now we do not quite understand why anyone should say that this was a hasty act, that they were taken unawares by this proposal. This was not a hasty proposal; far from it. It was put forward and delegations had the opportunity to consider the question and, had they wanted, they could have taken part in the lengthy discussions or negotiations before agreement was reached. What was the purpose of this exercise? The purpose was to have this draft resolution adopted today by consensus.

Therefore the outcome has been rather regrettable. My delegation, as one of the sponsors of the draft resolution, is perfectly satisfied with the overwhelming majority in favour of the draft resolution but, I repeat, it is regrettable that three members of the Outer Space Committee should at this time, when all we wanted was to have other members, who have every right to do so, participate in the Committee, break the tradition of consensus we have always had in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) (interpretation from Spanish): The delegation of Ecuador wishes to thank those delegations which cast their vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1. This has been a typically democratic day in the life of the United Nations, in keeping with its universality and the aspirations of the developing world.

In this connexion, we are convinced that the new members of the Outer Space Committee will make a positive and important contribution. The authority of the General Assembly has been preserved and our wishes met, not simply this time in the draft resolution which has been adopted but in the two previous years, as can be seen from the records of the First Committee, so that sufficient time has been given to reflect on this question.

Furthermore, the Outer Space Committee is a meeting not of experts but of representatives of sovereign States. To say that the work of that Committee is highly technical and requires scientific efforts and that therefore any increase in its membership could well impede its work is in our view as out of place as it is paradoxical, since it prejudges contributions that have not yet been made and places other committees and bodies of the United Nations system on a lower level. In this connexion, it might be well to recall the words of the representative of Egypt in the plenary assembly a few days ago when he said that his country rejected tutelage and neither gave nor accepted lessons.

(Mr. Albornoz, Ecuador)

In addition to all that, the merits of consensus have been extolled at every opportunity. But it would appear that consensus is desirable for everything except the acceptance of a few additional members. It would have been very encouraging for that desire for consensus to have made itself felt in the vote on that draft resolution, as we were told it would during the discussions that led to the drafting of a compromise text, in which the representative of Canada participated.

Mr. REIS (United States of America): My delegation does not wish to try your patience or the patience of the other members of the Committee by unduly prolonging this discussion. We are prepared to live with and respect the decision which this Committee has just taken and which the General Assembly will shortly take. But I must touch upon one point because the representative of Colombia said something which was not true. He said that those members who abstained had every opportunity to participate in "the long and difficult negotiations" - I think that was the phrase he used - which took place between his group of sponsors and the permanent representative of Austria. I just wish to make it clear for the record that the United States delegation was at no time informed of those discussions until their results were arrived at.

The CHAIRMAN: We have just concluded our debate on agenda items 35 and 36 relating to outer space.

The Committee has commented in detail on the work carried out by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space during the last year and has made several constructive suggestions for its future work. It has, at the same time, expressed its thanks and congratulations to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to its Chairmen, Peter Jankowitsch, as well as the subsidiary bodies of the Committee, for the excellent work that has been carried out. I wish fully to associate myself with those remarks.

(The Chairman)

The Outer Space Committee as the focal point for international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space has a very important task to perform in the years to come. In particular, it is charged with the vital matter of ensuring that the practical applications of space technology is harnessed for the benefit of all countries, particularly those of the developing areas. The use of communication satellites, meteorological satellites and remote sensing satellites has already inaugurated a new era in human existence and I have no doubt that the Outer Space Committee will endeavour with renewed vigour to ensure that the potential of space science and technology will be utilized in the solution of the urgent problems relating to the shortage of food, the growth of population and the preservation of the environment.

At the same time, the Outer Space Committee is entrusted with the task of ensuring that the developments relating to the exploration and use of outer space will take place in an orderly manner. The Committee has already taken considerable steps in this direction, beginning with the adoption of the Treaty on Principles governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and other Celestial Bodies, the tenth anniversary of the coming into effect of which is being celebrated this year with the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.39. We look forward to further strides in the Committee's efforts to establish a legal régime for outer space and space activities.

During the discussion we have just concluded, the members of this Committee have made several constructive suggestions to the Outer Space Committee to assist it in the tasks before it, particularly regarding the two major tasks to which I have just alluded. With the increase in its membership, as just recommended by this Committee in draft resolution A/C.1/32/L.43/Rev.1, the Outer Space Committee will also have broader participation in its work next year. I am certain that with such assistance and the support of this Committee and the General Assembly, we can look forward to another year of constructive and fruitful work from the Outer Space Committee. It is with that hope that I now declare concluded the Committee's consideration of the two agenda items relating to outer space.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.