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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Miculescu . . . . . (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 51: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/C.4/66/20 and A/C.4/66/L.2)

1. **Mr. Srivali** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that space science and technology were an integral part of modern life and had made possible advances in telecommunications, broadcasting and weather mapping. For developing countries, the application of space technologies could contribute significantly to development in terms of improving living conditions, conserving and managing natural resources, and enhancing preparedness for natural disasters. ASEAN encouraged the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to continue to explore ways to integrate space technologies into the implementation of the recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. ASEAN looked forward to cooperation and capacity-building at the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF).

2. The ASEAN Subcommittee on space technology and application (SCOSA) was formulating a framework to increase the use of space technology in disaster management. SCOSA and its remote sensing partner had provided valuable data during a number of natural disasters in the region, which had contributed significantly to mitigation and relief efforts. ASEAN was also working to create its own Earth-observation satellite by 2015 to provide high-quality data for research and early warning.

3. ASEAN welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) regional support offices. It commended countries that had voluntarily set up and funded the regional offices and encouraged others in a position to do so to follow suit. It welcomed the continued work of UN-SPIDER in developing the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, to use space-based information to support disaster management.

4. It was important to bear in mind the inherent risks of space technology and maintain vigilance. The fall of the upper atmosphere research satellite in September 2011 had revealed gaps in the ability to predict when and where the pieces would land. While the probability of space objects falling in populated areas was slim, the number of ageing satellites suggested that there were likely to be similar incidents. The increasing number of space objects in orbit, including space debris, gave cause for concern, and highlighted the importance of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines. It was also important to prepare for the possibility of collisions between satellites and other space objects.

5. Speaking as the representative of Thailand, he reaffirmed his Government's commitment to cooperation with the Outer Space Committee. Thailand also hoped to collaborate further with other organizations, including APRSAF, the Group on Earth Observations and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites. Thailand had organized numerous training events and conferences on satellite communication, and had used satellite communication for various purposes, including distance learning in education projects. To support capacity-building in space law, Thailand had co-organized a Workshop on Space Law in Bangkok in November 2010, where vital recommendations and observations had been made.

6. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported all initiatives aimed at halting the militarization of outer space and endorsed the principles of equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space and equal conditions for all States, irrespective of their level of scientific, technical and economic development, and non-appropriation of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, by claim of sovereignty, use, occupation or any other means. It also commended the emphasis placed by the Outer Space Committee on the use of data obtained from Earth observation satellites in sustainable development activities, on non-discriminatory access to remote-sensing data and information, and on capacity-building for developing countries in the use of remote-sensing technology for development and scientific purposes.

7. His country's General Organization for Remote Sensing played a significant role in developing the national economy through its implementation of various scientific, environmental and other projects. Recent examples included mapping of the country's volcanic and seismic hazards using remote-sensing technologies and a survey of its natural and agricultural resources using geographic information systems. It had

also entered into several cooperation agreements with international and Arab bodies, in which context it was engaged in a number of joint projects and sought to strengthen cooperation in such vital areas as information exchange and training.

8. The devastating human and material losses from natural disasters underscored the need for intensified efforts to establish a global disaster-management system supported by space-based information. To that end, the experience of UN-SPIDER would be invaluable. Developed countries should share with developing countries their know-how in space technology and allow them access to data at an affordable cost and in a timely and non-discriminatory manner. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications should also continue its assistance to developing countries and countries in economic transition in order to enable them to participate in and benefit from the space activities outlined in the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III). All outer space activities contributing to socio-economic development and prosperity must, however, be implemented with respect for the sovereign rights of States, including the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs. In short, international cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space must be enhanced as a matter of urgent priority in the interest of fostering greater peace, stability and progress for the benefit of humanity.

9. **Mr. Benashur** (Libya) said that the Outer Space Committee played an important role in shaping international standards for space activities and strengthening international cooperation for the development of an international legal regime governing space activities with a view to addressing such concerns as the militarization of outer space and preservation of the space environment. In that regard, the Scientific and Technical and Legal Subcommittees should intensify their efforts to elaborate an international legal instrument covering, inter alia, the use, definition and delimitation of outer space.

10. The exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes must remain consistent with the principles enunciated in article 1 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. Cooperation must also be enhanced between spacefaring and non-spacefaring countries, as well as between the former and international and non-governmental organizations, in order to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise concerning space science and the use of space for peaceful purposes in a non-competitive manner. A welcome forum in that regard was the annual Space Generation Congress, which played a key part in engaging young people's interest in the subject.

11. The use of nuclear power sources in outer space should be as limited as possible and the States concerned should provide the Outer Space Committee with comprehensive and transparent information on measures taken to ensure the safety of the terrestrial and space environments. Scientific forecasts of the long- and short-term risks associated with such use must also be studied and disseminated. The Outer Space Committee should furthermore continue to develop its Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and the Scientific and Technical and Legal Subcommittees should cooperate more closely in order to elaborate binding legal rules on space debris mitigation.

12. In the light of its connection with development and taking into account the consequences of climate change and natural disasters, the sustainability of space science activities was of universal interest. Developed countries should therefore be ready to share information relating to the safety of planet Earth, to which end effective early warning systems were particularly indispensable to disaster mitigation. The current workplan for the UN-SPIDER programme was especially relevant in that context, as were the Outer Space Committee's efforts to enhance cooperation with various Earth observation programmes around the globe. The discussions on the theme "Space and education" were useful to promoting youth participation in space science and technology, but the Outer Space Committee should systematically seek to increase awareness-raising and other activities, including in conjunction with education ministries, with the aim of attracting young people to the field of space science. As part of its efforts to enrich the current International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", the Outer Space Committee should also focus on enhancing the use of space-derived water in water management programmes.

13. Under the previous regime, Libya's space-related activities had not been optimized for the benefit of the country and it had made none of the scientific contributions to humanity that it was undoubtedly well-

resourced enough to make. Efforts would therefore be newly directed towards breaking new ground in the area of space science and technology in the interest of developing and building the new democratic Libya.

14. **Mr. Horikawa** (Japan) said that on behalf of his Government he would like to express deep appreciation for all the support given in the days and months since the March 2011 earthquake. Global navigation satellite systems had contributed significantly to the search, rescue and restoration efforts carried out following the earthquake. Satellite images provided by Sentinel Asia had also supported rescue efforts.

15. Japan attached great importance to the work of APRSAF as one model for regional space cooperation. It would continue to promote the activities of the Sentinel Asia initiative for disaster management. In September 2011, Japan had hosted the sixth meeting of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems.

16. Japan had contributed to the International Space Station (ISS) programme since its inception. The experimental module *Kibo*, or "hope", was conducting various on-orbit experiments. Japanese astronaut Satoshi Furukawa was scheduled to return to Earth in November 2011, while in 2013 Koichi Wakata would become the first Asian astronaut to serve as an ISS commander. In July 2011, three additional Japanese astronauts had qualified to serve on ISS. The H-II transfer vehicle had successfully conducted its second mission to supply ISS, and a third mission was being scheduled for 2012. Japan was also preparing to launch the first satellite for the Global Change Observation Mission, for the observation of global climate change and water circulation.

17. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that while satellite applications could make a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of all countries, space activities must be carried out in a manner compatible with the sovereign rights of States, including the principle of non-intervention, as enshrined in the relevant United Nations instruments. International endeavours to promote the peaceful uses of outer space could be successful only if fully supported by initiatives to prevent an arms race in outer space.

18. His Government attached high priority to capacity-building, which played an essential role in the sustainable development of space technology. It had hosted regional workshops and symposiums on space law, applications of space science and technology, and disaster management. Furthermore, it would be hosting a United Nations regional workshop on the use of space technology for human health improvement in October 2011. Iran had actively contributed to the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Space Coordination Organization (APSCO). The establishment of a UN-SPIDER regional support office in the country had made his Government an active regional partner with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

19. His Government made significant advances in space science and technology based on its own capability. It had inaugurated a space structure laboratory and an aerospace exhibition centre in 2011; the centre was the largest of its kind in the Middle East. Four satellites and a satellite carrier had been unveiled in February 2011. Two domestically manufactured fixed ground stations and one mobile station for receiving remote-sensing images had also been unveiled. A satellite carrier had been test launched in March 2011 and was likely to be launched soon with a biolife capsule. Finally, a national satellite launch vehicle site had been established, and several student satellite projects had been carried out.

20. **Mr. Pintado** (Mexico) said that the principle of equal access to outer space for all States, regardless of their level of economic or technological development, should continue to be the basis of the work of the United Nations on the topic of outer space. Regional and international cooperation were essential in that regard. His Government therefore supported regional initiatives to strengthen the universal use of exploration of outer space. In 2010, it had hosted the Sixth Space Conference of the Americas on the topic: Space and development: space application at the service of humanity and for the development of the Americas. The Space Conferences of the Americas sought to align positions on issues of common interest in respect of the peaceful uses of outer space, to agree on strategies to promote the practical use of space applications in support of regional socio-economic programmes, to promote the development of space legislation, and to strengthen education and training programmes in space science and technology.

21. The Sixth Conference had helped strengthen the participation of the academic, private and public sectors, as well as youth and non-governmental organizations, in regional and international space

science and technology programmes in support of economic, social, cultural and scientific development. A space camp and a youth forum had been organized to keep young people informed about the work of the Conference. The Conference had also supported the establishment of the Mexican space agency and the collaboration of academic institutions with the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean.

22. The Pachuca Declaration, adopted at the end of the Conference, outlined the principal elements of regional space policy, emphasizing the commitment of the participants to accede to the international space treaties and conventions in order to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks and encourage exploration, research and the peaceful uses of space technology. His Government would be heading the pro tempore secretariat of the Conference for a period of three years, and would work to implement the commitments contained in the Pachuca Declaration.

23. **Mr. Zhou** Lipeng (China) said that China's space industry continued its dynamic momentum. The global networking project of the BeiDou navigation satellite system continued to make steady progress and would soon complete the regional navigation system to provide services for the Asia-Pacific region. China had successfully launched *Tiangon*-I, the first step in its space station programme, in September 2011. His Government also attached great importance to the conversion of space technology into practical applications, including mapping, fisheries, transportation, meteorology and disaster prevention and reduction.

24. Space exploration and use should aim to achieve inclusive development so as to benefit all peoples regardless of their country's ability to participate in space activities. In view of the increasing congestion of the space environment, the strain on space resources and the threats to the long-term sustainable development of space activities, his Government maintained that outer space activities should be conducted in harmony with the space environment and in line with sustainable development, so as to make space exploration and exploitation environmentally friendly. Second, it believed that all countries had an equal right to the peaceful uses of outer space and every person in the world was entitled to benefit from the efficiency and comfort provided by space technology; great efforts were therefore needed to enable those countries which were not yet space-capable to participate in space programmes so that space exploration and exploitation would benefit all countries. Third, while the rapid development of commercial launching and space tourism enabled more people to experience outer space, it was important to enable the people of less developed countries to experience space exploration.

25. Inclusive development meant that all space-faring parties should enjoy equal opportunities and share benefits; that countries should make common progress through mutually beneficial cooperation; and that all civilizations should come together in mutual accommodation and man and nature should co-exist in harmony. It was only by upholding international cooperation based on equality and mutual benefit, openness and inclusiveness, that inclusive development could be achieved. International cooperation had been essential to the success of space exploration and exploitation. Outer space law was an essential guarantee for preventing the weaponization of outer space and achieving sustainable development; the inclusive development of outer space required continued international cooperation and the steady advancement of the rule of law in outer space. China reaffirmed its commitment to the inclusive development of outer space characterized by peace, development, cooperation and the rule of law.

26. **Mr. Kalinin** (Russian Federation) recalled that just over 50 years ago, on 12 April 1961, the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin had been the first human being in space. 2011 also marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Outer Space Committee. His delegation welcomed the proclamation of 12 April as the "International Day of Space Flight".

27. Every year, the international cooperation that was essential to the vital goal of ensuring that outer space was used exclusively for peaceful purposes involved a greater number of participants. While that was welcome, it also highlighted the need to prevent the militarization of outer space and its pollution by space debris, as well as to take a responsible attitude to research in space, as key aspects of ensuring sustainable benefits of its utilization for mankind as a whole.

28. The Russian Federation attached priority to such areas of cooperation as remote sensing of Earth, the use of the Global Navigation Satellite System, the launching of spacecraft by Russian carrier rockets and

fundamental and applied research. The federal space agency had concluded agreements on space cooperation with over 20 countries. At the multilateral level, the Russian Federation was an active participant in the Outer Space Committee, and contributed to the work of the Committee on Space Research, the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordinating Committee, the Forum of space agencies, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites and the International Astronautical Congress. The work of the Outer Space Committee, as the central international forum for discussing all aspects of the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, should be strengthened.

29. It had recently become apparent that the system of space law was becoming less and less suited to the demands for the development of the outer space sector. If steps were not taken to deal with the problems, the Legal Subcommittee would risk losing its status as the most authoritative forum on issues of international space law. The entire system needed to be comprehensively and progressively adapted to present-day realities, in a single treaty under United Nations auspices. At its next session, the Subcommittee should consider drawing up a list of problems and unresolved issues to serve as a road map for action and provide a better insight into areas in which consensus could be reached.

30. **Mr. Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that outer space must be used rationally and for peaceful purposes, for the benefit of all humanity and future generations; equal access for the entire international community was therefore essential, Space technology applications must benefit everyone, hence the importance of universal access to space data. For developing countries, sustainable development was a prerequisite in order to be able to make use of space applications.

31. The Argentine satellite Aquarius/SAC-D, the fourth satellite in the series, and the largest satellite built in Argentina, had been launched from the Vandengerg air force in the United States of America on 10 June 2011. Its main objective was to measure the salinity of seas and oceans in order to establish long-term climate models, which were vitally important to the study of climate change; it also measured large-scale ground humidity to aid in the development of early warning systems for flooding and epidemics. The satellite carried eight highly complex instruments which enabled it to study the oceans, climate, the atmosphere and the environment, and to monitor space debris. The mission had been developed by the National Commission on Space Activities in cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), entities of the Argentine science and technology sector, and space agencies of Brazil, Canada, France and Italy.

32. International cooperation clearly contributed to the development of space science and technology and their applications; capacity-building in interested States; and the exchange of knowledge and technology among States, on a mutually acceptable basis. Regional and interregional cooperation could strengthen the peaceful uses of outer space and help States develop their space capacities, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The full application of international law was of fundamental importance in all space activities.

33. **Mr. Bomkoungou** (Burkina Faso) said that while it was obvious that space activities and their applications made important contributions to the welfare of humanity, there were serious concerns in respect of the conservation of the space environment. It was therefore important to strengthen international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space and to ensure scrupulous respect for the relevant international instruments. His delegation welcomed the inclusion of the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the agenda of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, in view of the negative implication for international peace and security.

34. It was important to strengthen regional and interregional cooperation in the use of space technology applications in order to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters. In that regard, a regional workshop on training and awareness-raising on using space data to manage natural disasters had been organized in Ouagadougou in September 2011, in partnership with UN-SPIDER. The workshop had helped raise the awareness of decision makers in regional, subregional and national institutions about the relevance and usefulness of space technologies, and strengthen the capacity of some 20 African experts in respect of natural disaster prevention and management using space tools. Burkina Faso called on the Outer Space Committee to continue to support international cooperation for the transfer of technology in order to build up expertise and make it available so that countries could protect themselves against natural disasters.

35. His delegation affirmed the need to resolve major challenges resulting from space activities in a holistic manner. All humanity could and should benefit from the peaceful uses of outer space through international cooperation, provided that the international community, and in particular Member States, fulfilled their responsibility to ensure sound management of outer space, as the common heritage of humanity.

36. **Mr. Canuto** (Holy See) said that it was important for scientists to research issues that were little understood, such as the issue of space debris. There were three important aspects to consider in respect of space debris: it would increase and was not reversible; debris could be so minute as to be impossible to measure; and the magnitude of the problem was unknown. The unpredictable nature of debris re-entering Earth had already been demonstrated. Some important steps had been taken, including the adoption of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines. It was to be hoped that the international community would address the issue with strong action.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.