

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
19th meeting
held on
Monday, 13 November 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) - 1989

CONTENTS

- AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 75: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750,
2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/44/SR.19
27 November 1989
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/44/21, A/44/653, A/44/509, A/44/329 and Add.1, A/44/433 and Add.1)

1. Mrs. LEGWAILA (Botswana) said that her country was glad to note that the process of restructuring the Department of Public Information (DPI) had not done away with one of its vital units, the Anti-apartheid Radio Section. It hoped that the anti-apartheid programmes and the posts that had been allocated to them in the programme budget would be retained, and that those posts would be used only for that purpose. It also hoped that the programmes would be complemented by the use of the six languages spoken in South Africa - Afrikaans, English, Setswana, Sesotho, Xhosa and Zulu - that would give impetus to the struggle of the oppressed Black majority in South Africa and afford the oppressors a chance to learn that people of all colours could live together in peace.
2. The Department of Public Information was a vital organ in the context of Namibia. That was why Botswana favoured strengthening the Department's delivery system and improving its efficiency. Southern Africa needed the Department more than ever before. While the South African authorities claimed that the region would soon see a new South Africa, the Government of South Africa was now threatening to close or ban one of the most important Black majority newspapers, The Nation. The Department would play a very important role in the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on apartheid. It was also to be hoped that the Department would continue its efforts to disseminate information on the Middle East.
3. Document A/44/653 was very informative and detailed. It highlighted areas of great interest to Botswana, such as assistance to the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, racial discrimination, African economic development and recovery, decolonization, social development and human rights, the World Disarmament Campaign, women and their role in society and the strengthening of the United Nations information centres. Document A/44/509 showed the need to enhance co-operation between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and DPI.
4. Lastly, her delegation wished to express its appreciation to DPI for transmitting live during General Assembly sessions the statements made by Heads of State or Ministers of developing countries, in particular, and it hoped that staff cuts would not affect that service. It was also pleased to note that the Department was finalizing the South African listenership survey on United Nations anti-apartheid radio programmes, in which her country had participated. It regretted that the Committee on Information had been unable to present a consensus draft resolution on the new world information and communication order, and hoped that consensus would eventually be reached.
5. Mr. ACOSTA FRAGACHAN (Venezuela) said that the Department of Public Information should continue its efforts to promote the work and objectives of the United Nations system. His delegation fully supported the reorganization of the

(Mr. Acosta Fragachan, Venezuela)

Department and the measures adopted, which should be reviewed in 1992 at the latest, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). It was absolutely necessary for DPI to have the most advanced technological equipment.

6. With respect to co-operation between DPI and UNESCO, Venezuela was pleased to note that the work of training radio and television broadcasters and journalists from developing countries was continuing. It was also important that DPI had strengthened its ties with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and had participated in the Pool's Fifth General Conference.

7. With regard to the question of social development and human rights, Venezuela hoped that DPI would publish and distribute in a timely fashion the various instruments and rules relating to the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, to be held in Havana in 1990.

8. With regard to recommendation 8 (c) of paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 43/50, Venezuela attached the utmost importance to the implementation of the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia and supported the efforts of DPI in that regard. The Department had undertaken various activities to promote public support for the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), in which an infantry battalion of the Venezuelan armed forces was participating as part of the UNTAG reserve.

9. With respect to the social, economic and cultural effects of the accelerated development of communication technologies, described in section III of document A/44/509, Venezuela supported the new UNESCO proposals in the field of communications included in the third medium-term plan (1990-1995). As document A/44/329 showed, the effectiveness of the United Nations information centres depended on their ability to disseminate information on United Nations activities widely and impartially.

10. Her delegation supported the work of the Executive Media Service of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, which had arranged the forthcoming round table of Latin American and Caribbean journalists. With respect to the new world information and communication order, the Committee on Information must fulfil the mandate given to it under General Assembly resolution 34/182 and reaffirmed in resolution 43/60. Lastly, her delegation supported the work of the International Programme for the Development of Communication of UNESCO and condemned the monopolization and arbitrary use of the media, which made it possible to manipulate data and distorted reality.

11. Mr. KORSHENI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that in a statement made on 19 April 1989 before the Committee on Information, his delegation had expressed satisfaction with the activities of DPI in southern Africa, but had regretted that no consensus had emerged on some basic issues relating to information. The most important issue concerned the establishment of a new world information and communication order to redress the current imbalance, in which the developed countries dominated the communication media. After five years of debate on the

(Mr. Korsheni, United Republic of Tanzania)

subject, the time had come to act. Those who had proposed the idea of a new order were prepared to co-operate to overcome some of the obstacles, but not to continue to discuss the issue interminably.

12. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the reorganization of DPI (A/44/433) was a thorough analysis of the work of the Department. The reforms initiated in 1987 had been intended to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's services. The General Assembly had requested DPI to select news, facts and programmes in such a way as to reduce imbalances and inequalities between North and South in the area of information.

13. His delegation commended DPI for its coverage of events in southern Africa, especially in Namibia, and hoped that that process would continue after Namibia's independence. The Department should also ensure that the issue of apartheid and the Middle East situation, including the question of Palestine, received priority coverage. It should continue to disseminate information on other questions such as the environment, illicit trafficking in narcotics and drug abuse, and other issues of immediate concern.

14. The reforms within DPI should also aim at an equitable geographical distribution of posts, giving priority to the needs of the developing countries that were underrepresented. With regard to the distribution of posts, it was important to rely primarily upon the figures given in the Fifth Committee. Any other source of information should be analysed and verified by the Fifth Committee before being used.

15. The United Nations information centres should be run in accordance with the objectives for which they had been established. It was regrettable that the post of Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Dar-es-Salaam remained vacant.

16. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that his delegation fully subscribed to the statement made by the representative of the Group of 77, but wished to refer to a number of vital points. The evolution in relations between East and West was welcome, but the current challenge was to use the information media to promote peace and development for the benefit of all, because developments in technology continued to widen the gap separating the developed and the developing countries in the area of information, thereby reducing the developing countries to the role of mere recipients.

17. The inherent danger in that state of affairs had given rise to the concept of a new world information and communication order, the aim of which was to democratize global information processes, strengthen the information infrastructure of developing countries and promote a better-balanced flow of information. For its part, the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication had been established to help the developing countries that were still lagging behind to acquire modern technology for information and communication. But the funds allocated to the Programme had fallen short of the needs, and the developed

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

countries had not taken effective measures to narrow the gap. The developing countries therefore required bilateral and multilateral assistance to improve their information infrastructure.

18. Regrettably, efforts still persisted to call into question the desirability of the new order, which the dominant Powers regarded as a threat to the principle of the free flow of information. His delegation did not agree. The aim of the new order was to universalize the principle of the free flow of information. To advocate the continuance of the current order was tantamount to condemning the developing countries to a state of perpetual dependence.

19. In all developed countries, the mass media formed an integral part of the power structure and had often been used to distort the truth. For example, they had depicted the movements struggling for the liberation of colonial peoples as terrorist organizations and, more recently, had defended collaboration with the apartheid régime.

20. It was regrettable that, instead of focusing on how to attain the new order, some delegations were endeavouring to change its definition in a transparent attempt to make the developing countries accept the iniquities of the current system, despite the flexibility they had shown in recent years and despite the debate in the Committee which had, on the whole, recognized the inadequacies of the current order and the imperative need to develop an international communication structure that would benefit developed and the developing countries alike. UNESCO had a critical role to play in that regard and must be given the requisite support. Uganda also wished to express its appreciation to those countries which had provided bilateral assistance to developing countries.

21. His delegation was convinced that DPI had an important role to play in furthering the objectives of the Organization. It had therefore carefully followed the reform process in the Department since its inception in 1987 and had participated in the deliberations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee. It was, however, regrettable that the proposals on section 27 of the proposed programme budget being considered by the Fifth Committee either separately or with the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/44/433) had not allayed the fears voiced by Uganda in CPC, particularly his Government's concern that the restructuring of DPI should have no negative impact on the delivery of programmes mandated by the General Assembly. As indicated in paragraphs 48 and 217 of the report and in paragraph 263 of document A/44/16, the new structure had a number of inadequacies. His delegation hoped that the Secretariat would respond to all the issues raised in the report.

22. It appeared that the decision adopted at the forty-third session of the General Assembly to reinstate the anti-apartheid unit of the Department of Public Information and assign 18 Professional staff to it had not been fully implemented. It was also worth noting General Assembly resolution 43/213, paragraph 17, and resolution 43/50 H, paragraph 1, because the evaluation of radio broadcasts envisaged by subparagraph (c) of the latter could help to strengthen and enhance

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

programme delivery by that unit. It was imperative that CPC, ACABQ and the Special Committee against Apartheid itself should examine such evaluations in accordance with their respective mandates.

23. Mr. ISAKSSON (Director, UNESCO Office for Liaison with the United Nations) said that he had noted the questions posed by some speakers concerning his organization's programmes and that he would inform headquarters about them. Referring to the recent decision by Commission IV of the General Conference of UNESCO on a new strategy in the communications sphere, he remarked that the purpose of the strategy was to ensure a wider and more balanced flow of information at national and international levels without any obstacle to freedom of expression. At the operational level, UNESCO would seek to: encourage the free flow of information at the national and international levels; develop appropriate means of strengthening communications in developing countries so as to promote their participation in the communication process; advance mutual knowledge and understanding among nations, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as might be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas. With regard to the Communication and solidarity programme, the Commission had decided to make a major new effort aimed at mobilizing more resources from industrialized countries and intensifying activities in the framework of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, in particular by developing the infrastructure, expertise and capacities of developing countries in the communication sphere.

24. Mrs. SEVIGNY (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that she appreciated the remarks made by speakers on the work performed by the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the progress of the reforms there, as well as their advice, of which due account would be taken.

25. In reply to the specific questions posed by delegations, a number of them had referred to the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, which they had in general supported. The representatives of Zimbabwe and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic had referred to the contents of the forewords to the two reports and asked for clarification. She did not believe that it would be productive for the Committee to observe an exchange of allegations between an official of the Secretariat and a member of the Joint Inspection Unit regarding the preparation of those reports, and she noted, in that connection, the wise attitude adopted by the Secretary-General as set out in document A/44/433/Add.1, paragraph 2.

26. As to the substance of the recommendations of JIU, while she disagreed with many of the Inspector's analyses and conclusions, he had offered very positive and useful observations in other areas and the Secretary-General had accepted various recommendations or elements thereof.

27. The representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had commented, with respect to the Inspector's statement, that the new administrative machinery of the Department was not more effective than the previous one, that the reform of DPI probably therefore could not be considered finished. In fact, the further reforms of the administrative machinery which the Secretary-General had introduced in his

(Mrs. Seigny)

proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 corresponded quite closely to those recommended by the Inspector and that was why, in paragraph 4 of his comments (A/44/433/Add.1), the Secretary-General had indicated that he concurred in essence with the Inspector's recommendation.

28. The reform process in the Department had taken far longer than might have been wished, and, while it was essential to retain a measure of flexibility to adapt to changing situations, it was imperative to provide a period of stability for the Department. The restructuring of the Department should therefore be considered concluded, subject to the minor adjustments such as any organization might require from time to time.

29. The representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic had referred to the need for increased co-ordination of information among the organizations of the United Nations system and to the consequent need to enhance the efficiency of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC). At its October session, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) had considered the report in document ACC/1989/CRP.10 entitled "Enhancing the public image of the United Nations system" and had approved the recommendations that it contained, including a revision of the terms of reference of JUNIC aimed at making it more effective. One of the recommendations approved by ACC called for priority to be given to the preparation of an information package on the United Nations system which would explain the mandate and functions of each of its separate entities.

30. A further priority task would be the identification of the human, financial, technological and material means of collective action in order to make maximum use of the scarce resources available for information activities. In that context, priority was to be given to considering the possibility of developing a system-wide audio-visual capacity in both production and distribution and a methodology for the co-production of films, as well as to the funding of information programmes.

31. Various delegations had referred to the efforts made to expand co-operation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and the Broadcasting Organization of the Non-Aligned Countries. Plans had been set out to make United Nations dispatches available in English and French to five focal point news agencies in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which would disseminate United Nations information through a network of news agencies and communication media in their regions. Confirmation from the agencies involved was being awaited for the project to be put into operation.

32. The representative of Kenya had emphasized the need to expand the content of the training programmes for journalists. In order to achieve that aim, the Department would strive to obtain greater resources, including extrabudgetary support.

33. Several delegations had referred to the need to ensure an adequate geographical distribution of posts in the Department. She shared that concern and could confirm that the Department regularly monitored the situation, which was in general good, although it had to be admitted that some regions were better

/...

(Mrs. Seigny)

represented than others. Improvements in that regard could only be achieved when vacancies occurred and new staff members were recruited, but delegations could rest assured that the necessary measures would be taken to make improvements.

34. She had noted with interest the suggestion of the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that a regional conference might be held at Moscow in 1990 on the United Nations and mass media in European countries and hoped that further consultation on the subject would bring the project to fruition.

35. She was appreciative that many delegations had referred to the limited resources available to DPI to carry out its mandate and the need to ensure adequate resources for the future. At a time when there was a resurgence in the utility of the United Nations in the resolution of international issues, it was vital to ensure that its mandate to promote the understanding of the work and purposes of the Organization would not remain unfilled for want of financial support.

36. For its part, the Department would spare no effort in pursuing more efficient methods and seeking extrabudgetary resources and co-production arrangements in order to supplement its efforts, with respect for the priorities established by the General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM 75: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(A/44/20, A/44/469)

37. The CHAIRMAN noted that, in connection with the new item, the Committee had before it two reports contained in documents A/44/20 and A/44/469, respectively, as well as notes and letters from several countries contained in documents A/44/353, 305, 347, 409, 552 and 598.

38. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) had the fundamental role of assisting the General Assembly in its efforts to promote the orderly progress of space activities and to ensure that technological advances developed in that sphere would be shared by all mankind. After concluding five international treaties in the field of outer space and a series of principles on remote sensing of Earth from space, COPUOS was preparing new international instruments with the aim of developing international law in that area.

39. Furthermore, action had been taken in order to extend the benefits of outer space activities to all Member States through the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82). He hoped that new impetus would be given to international co-operation through the organization of the international space year in 1992, during which the five hundredth anniversary of the voyage of Christopher Columbus to the new world and the thirty-fifth anniversary of the International Geophysical Year would also be commemorated. COPUOS proposed that the General Assembly should endorse that initiative in its resolution at the current session.

40. Mr. TANASIE (Romania), speaking as the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, was pleased to present the results of the work of his Committee in a year during which its thirtieth anniversary was being commemorated, as well as the thirty-fifth anniversary of European space co-operation, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of INTELSAT and the twentieth anniversary of the first lunar landing.

41. The work of COPUOS was based on the work of its two Sub-Committees, the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee. Their reports were contained in documents A/AC.105/429 and A/AC.105/430 respectively.

42. At its thirty-second session, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/56, COPUOS had considered the agenda item "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes" as a priority question. It had concluded that through its work in scientific, technical and legal fields it had an important role to play in that area. The States members of COPUOS had agreed that its role should be strengthened in order to allow further development of international space law, including, as appropriate, the preparation of international agreements on various aspects of peaceful applications of the achievements of space technology. To that end it was also necessary for COPUOS to improve the methods and forms of its work.

43. COPUOS endorsed the programme of activities for 1990 for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and expressed appreciation for the hospitality and assistance of the Governments of Australia, the German Democratic Republic, Italy, Pakistan, Spain, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Space Agency, ESCAP, FAO, UNDP and WMO in holding courses and seminars. Furthermore, it welcomed the invitations received in connection with the activities planned for 1990 from the Governments of Cuba and Italy, as well as FAO and the European Space Agency. It also noted with appreciation the financial contributions of the Governments of Austria, Nigeria, Pakistan and the United Kingdom and the fellowships offered by Austria, Brazil, the German Democratic Republic and the European Space Agency.

44. The States members of COPUOS again had urged that steps be taken to ensure the financial soundness of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

45. In connection with the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, the Working Group of the Whole of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee had been reconvened and had made 14 recommendations, which had been endorsed by COPUOS and which, among other things, included certain studies and reports of relevance to the implementation of the recommendations of that Conference.

46. In that Sub-Committee a broad consensus had emerged regarding the importance of the item "Use of nuclear power sources in outer space", and productive work had continued in the Working Group on that item. Among other things, it had provided important background information for the elaboration of relevant draft principles. On the basis of the technical discussions concerning dispersal of nuclear fuel and the possibility of collision of nuclear power sources with space debris held in the Working Group, the Sub-Committee had recommended that, upon completion of their missions, spacecraft with nuclear power sources should be placed in a "parking

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

orbit" until their radioactivity had decreased to an acceptable minimum level before re-entry to Earth.

47. COPUOS appreciated the participation of representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other international organizations in its activities and those of its subsidiary bodies. Furthermore, it found the reports submitted by those bodies helpful in fulfilling its role as a focal point for international co-operation. During the discussion on the item "Matters relating to remote sensing of Earth by satellites, including, inter alia, applications for developing countries", COPUOS had recognized the importance of international efforts to ensure the continuity, compatibility and complementarity of systems for remote sensing of the Earth. The Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee had recommended that such information and data should be disseminated at low cost and in a timely and non-discriminatory manner so as to meet the needs of the developing countries, and that the latter should have free access to data from meteorological satellites.

48. There had been no major changes in the positions held by States members regarding the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit, including its utilization and applications in the field of space communications.

49. The Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee had underlined the importance of international co-operation in providing all countries with access to benefits of space science and technology. Following the efforts of the past four years to expand the scientific content of its work, the Sub-Committee had agreed that the theme fixed for special attention of its 1990 session should be "The use of space technology in terrestrial search and rescue and in disaster relief activities" and that COSPAR and IAF should be invited to arrange a symposium on that theme.

50. The Outer Space Committee had taken up the new item on its agenda ("spin-off benefits of space technology") and had agreed that spin-offs were yielding benefits in many fields, including medicine, industry, energy, environmental protection, agriculture, forestry and marine fisheries. The Committee had emphasized the importance of international co-operation in developing spin-off benefits and ensuring that all countries, particularly developing countries, had access to those benefits.

51. The Legal Sub-Committee had made substantial progress in elaborating draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Its Working Group on that question had reached consensus on two additional draft principles: principle 6, on consultations, and principle 10, on settlement of disputes. The Sub-Committee had already reached consensus on three other draft principles: principle 1, on applicability of international law; principle 5, on notification of re-entry, and principle 7, on assistance to States. The discussion on the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit had continued in much the same manner as in the recent past; it had focused on several issues, and the Committee had recommended that the item should be retained on the agenda of the Legal Sub-Committee.

52. In 1988, after some years of negotiation, the Legal Sub-Committee had

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

finalized a choice of a new item for its agenda: "Consideration of 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". In that regard, the Committee had endorsed the compromise proposal of the delegation of Austria to consider the national legal frameworks relating to the application of the principle contained in article 1 of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and of relevant international agreements that Member States had entered into; that would lead to the establishment of a working group to consider the item not later than 1991.

53. The Outer Space Committee had considered the issue of space debris and had concluded that Member States should pay more attention to the problem of collisions with space debris and other aspects of that issue. It had also called for continuation of national research on the subject, and had postponed putting the question on its agenda.

54. As the foregoing brief review showed, the Committee and its subsidiary bodies had made considerable progress during the past year. Perhaps one of the most important accomplishments had been the consensus on the celebration of an international space year. Following the recommendation of the General Assembly in resolution 43/56, the Committee had discussed several proposals, and had recommended that the General Assembly should endorse the initiative of international scientific organizations and bodies to designate 1992 as international space year. To bring about a meaningful role for the United Nations in the celebration of the year, the Committee had recommended that the training and educational capabilities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications should be financed with voluntary contributions by Member States and without any impact on the United Nations regular budget or the existing work of the Programme.

55. One area in which the need for international co-operation was rapidly being recognized was that of the global environment and the effect of human activities on it. Space technology, with its unique ability to survey the global environment, could be a major tool in understanding the dynamics of climate and help reconcile the need to improve living conditions around the world with the need to protect the environment. The Committee and its Sub-Committees were examining those issues to see how the United Nations could best contribute to that goal. A number of international organizations were developing plans to celebrate the international space year, with major emphasis on the applications of space technology for protecting the environment.

56. While it was important to recognize and to make the most of the opportunities for co-operation, it was also important not to underestimate the difficulties of realizing international co-operation. Space activities, particularly in the fields of space communication, satellite meteorology and space research, offered examples of intergovernmental and non-governmental, global and regional organizations that had contributed greatly to giving all countries access to some of the benefits of space technology. It was essential that those organizations should be supported and strengthened, while new forms of international co-operation were developed.

/...

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

There was still much work to be done in order for all States to be able to participate in space activities, and the Committee, in co-operation with other international and regional organizations, was working towards strengthening and expanding co-operation in that field.

57. Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria) said it seemed safe to say that, on the whole, the consideration of the item was taking place under auspicious circumstances: a positive political climate, a constructive atmosphere in the United Nations and in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Sub-Committees and the concrete results achieved during the past year.

58. With regard to the work done by the Committee, it was worth recalling that, after considering the item on ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes, it had been able to agree on a somewhat larger common ground than in previous years. The Committee had concluded that it had an important role to play in assuring that outer space was maintained for peaceful purposes, and had noted that strengthening international co-operation in the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space implied the need to improve its methods of work.

59. For the first time in its history, the Committee had reached consensus with regard to space debris; there was still a lack of scientific and technical information on the question, and hence more work would have to be done at the national level, but an increasing number of States were recognizing that space debris represented an unacceptable risk both in space and on Earth.

60. Generally speaking, there was a need for increasing awareness of the dangers and uses of space technology in relation to the environment. In that connection, it was encouraging to note that the 82nd Inter-Parliamentary Conference, held in London from 4 to 9 September 1989, had adopted a resolution on the peaceful access to space and its use for the benefit of mankind, in which it had called, inter alia, for the development of applications of space technology as an instrument for combating environmental problems, particularly those of developing countries.

61. The Working Group of the Legal Sub-Committee had made substantial progress in its consideration of the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. In addition to reaching a consensus on two new draft principles, it had succeeded in agreeing on the schedule of work relating to the new item to be examined by the Sub-Committee.

62. While recommending that the General Assembly should endorse the initiative of international scientific organizations and bodies to designate 1992 as international space year, the Committee had also recommended that the United Nations Programme on Space Applications should be used to enhance the work done by the Organization in that field and that the Programme should be financed through voluntary contributions.

63. In his Government's opinion, the Outer Space Committee's report fell short in one respect: owing to difficulties connected with the Legal Sub-Committee and contrary to previous practice, the report contained no recommendation with regard

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Austria)

to the dates and venues of the sessions of the Committee and its Sub-Committees in 1990. Furthermore, the Fifth Committee was examining that matter and would probably reach a satisfactory conclusion. Once that question was resolved, the Outer Space Committee would be able to continue its work in 1990.

64. Mr. BUSSY KALYUNGULYUNGU (Zaire) said that at a time when general and complete disarmament could become a reality, the search for appropriate ways and means to ensure that outer space continued to be used for peaceful purposes was a matter of the utmost priority. The prevention of an arms race and hostilities in outer space continued to be an essential condition for the promotion of international co-operation in that sphere. Therefore, his delegation endorsed the proposal made at the recent session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to declare 1992 as international space year.

65. With regard to the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, his delegation regretted that the necessary funds had not been available to the Committee to enable it to implement the programmes proposed by the Conference and appealed to all Member States, governmental and non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies to mobilize the necessary funds to meet those obligations.

66. In that connection, his delegation considered that the Committee should be given a new, clear and specific mandate to make a detailed evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the Second Conference in order to improve the execution of activities relating to international co-operation, in particular those provided for in the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, and to propose specific measures to strengthen that co-operation and increase its dynamism and efficiency.

67. The spin-off benefits of space technology should not be enjoyed solely by the developed countries, since the exploration and utilization of space should benefit all States.

68. His delegation welcomed the decision taken at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament to re-establish an ad hoc committee on the item "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", which would concern itself with the definition of the status of outer space as the common heritage of mankind. In addition, his delegation was in favour of the establishment of regional and subregional training centres and of mobilizing for that purpose the necessary funds so that the inhabitants of the developing countries could familiarize themselves with space technologies and their applications.

69. Mr. EHLERS (Uruguay) said that the development of mankind with regard to the utilization of outer space was centred in the hands of a very few countries as a result of the disparity in resources available to achieve progress in an unknown field. The drive towards new frontiers had caused wars, devastation and suffering, and the indiscriminate exploitation of nature had resulted in the destruction of a large part of the planet's ecosystem. Those who had become rich and powerful through such action urged everyone to share responsibility for avoiding disaster.

(Mr. Ehlers, Uruguay)

Outer space was a frontier that seemed to be as unlimited as the Earth's natural resources had seemed to be at the time of the industrial revolution. Therefore, the time had come to begin working together and sharing the responsibility for and benefits of space activities.

70. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was the only body for the discussion of the interests and concerns of countries with regard to outer space. In that respect, Uruguay, as a small and technologically limited country, viewed with concern the recent trend to reduce the Committee's activity and to limit its working time, which it considered to be a mistake.

71. The Committee, which had made very substantial progress, was in a situation in which procedural issues hampered the consideration of substantive matters. His country considered that the Committee should be concerned with such important items as the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the manner in which the spin-off benefits of space technology were to be made available to those who needed them in order to improve their standard of living. Furthermore, the General Assembly should decide that the working group on the new legal item should begin to function in 1990 in order to produce principles or agreements that would serve as a basis for future action. His Government considered also that the definition and delimitation of outer space and the use of the geostationary orbit should continue to be considered with an open mind and without prejudice to the work being done in other bodies.

72. Mr. FAWZY (Egypt) said that more than 30 years had elapsed since the recognition of the existence of a generic relationship between military and civilian activities in outer space. That assessment had been wise and totally justified. While progress in space technology had facilitated access to new domains for peaceful co-operation, the ambivalent nature of that technology underscored the need to establish safeguards against an arms race in outer space. The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, constituted a solid basis for international action; it sought to prevent an arms race in outer space and to govern its peaceful uses for the benefit of all countries.

73. With regard to the prevention of the arms race, his Government had dealt with that question in detail at the Conference on Disarmament. The discrepancy in article IV of the Treaty on Outer Space, which implicitly permitted the deployment of some weapons in outer space although it prohibited them on the Moon and other celestial bodies, should be redressed to ensure that no weapons were deployed in space.

74. Furthermore, the legal norms governing the peaceful uses of outer space had not kept up with the pace of technological development; consequently, national interests had prevented or hampered the application of principles governing international co-operation in that respect. His delegation welcomed the Legal Sub-Committee's decision to propose the establishment of a working group to study the issue of legal aspects relating to the exploration and utilization of outer space.

(Mr. Fawzy, Egypt)

75. The Committee's work must be speeded up and it should look towards the future. It was regrettable that there were still recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space which had not been implemented.

76. While the exchanges between experts during the meetings of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee were valuable, it was essential to bear in mind the Sub-Committee's goal, which was to promote international co-operation and evolve modalities for such co-operation in the areas discussed. COPUOS should establish a basis for dialogue and lay the groundwork for resolving future problems. In that regard, the Sub-Committees had constructive ideas on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space and on space debris.

77. His delegation believed that a generic relationship existed between the issues raised in the Conference on Disarmament and in COPUOS. While there would be no point in establishing a formal link between the two bodies, it was clear that the issues they considered were interrelated. It might suffice to ensure that each body had a clear awareness of what occurred in the other.

78. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) said that one of the recurrent issues in COPUOS was how to define international co-operation and give it substance. The developing countries had understood that technological progress must not be at variance with the fundamental principles of international law and that, in that context, the topic of co-operation must take on particular relevance. The main defence of those countries lay in the progressive confirmation of those principles in regulations. For example, it was crucial to determine the scope of the concept of mankind's common heritage. However, the General Assembly had never defined the concept of natural resource, and that omission impeded a more ambitious effort.

79. Acting in a highly responsible manner, the developing countries had endeavoured to establish legal regulations on the questions referred to in paragraph 5, subparagraphs (a), (b) and (c), of document A/AC.105/C.2/L.162, submitted by the Group of 77 at the twenty-sixth session of the Legal Sub-Committee. While a new legal item for that Sub-Committee had subsequently been adopted by consensus, those concerns remained fully valid, and they should serve as the basis for future legislative work. His delegation reiterated that the General Assembly should establish the proposed working group in time for it to be operational in 1990. It also believed that the urgent problem of space debris should be considered. That question was being reviewed by a technical committee in Chile.

80. Chile was not opposed to studying ways of improving the efficiency of COPUOS provided that it was not to the detriment of the Committee's legislative work and substantive debates. In that regard, he regretted the lack of agreement at the Committee's preceding session concerning the timetable of meetings for 1990, a question which had taken up much of the Committee's time.

81. As to the topics under consideration, he emphasized the need to achieve more definitive texts on the subject of nuclear power sources in outer space at the

(Mr. Gonzalez, Chile)

following sessions. In fact, since the agreement on remote sensing, no progress had been made in the legal regulation of the peaceful uses of outer space, while technology had continued to evolve.

82. Chile believed that COPUOS should give particular attention to the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, which required binding commitments guaranteeing real access to all the benefits of space technology. The geostationary orbit also warranted more thorough analysis. The concept of equal access provided a good basis to initiate negotiations on that subject.

83. As to the delimitation of outer space, Chile favoured a legal régime which established the boundaries between airspace and outer space, although it was prepared to consider other proposals which, while safeguarding that criterion maintained the principle of space freedom. It also reiterated its concern about the militarization of outer space. That fact was regrettable and reflected a legal lacuna in the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, which was at one time the subject of an amendment submitted by Mexico and France. It might be appropriate to reconsider the relevant proposals.

84. As to the scope of the Committee's competence, his delegation believed that it was impossible to separate the concepts of the peaceful and military uses of outer space. For its part, Chile had consistently been advocating the idea that COPUOS should be allowed to give a technical opinion on the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, which would be in line with the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. Lastly, Chile confirmed its intention of focusing all its efforts on giving substance to the relevant norms of space law.

85. Mr. DUTT (India) said that India's outer space programme had achieved significant progress, particularly in the processes related to the middle atmosphere. The nationally manufactured remote-sensing satellite IRS-1A had performed extremely satisfactorily and the images that it had retransmitted had been particularly useful. The launch of the satellite IRS-1B was expected to take place in 1991. Two geostationary satellites, INSAT-1B and 1C, were currently in orbit, providing services in the fields of communication, meteorology, television and radio broadcasting. The second generation of INSAT-II satellites was under construction.

86. The augmented satellite launch vehicle programme, which had suffered a setback, was being redesigned, and satisfactory progress was being made in the polar satellite launch vehicle, which would make possible national launches for future Indian remote-sensing satellites.

87. International co-operative arrangements had gained further momentum in 1989, including the renewal of the agreement between the Indian Space Research Organization and the European Space Agency, the conclusion of an agreement between India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in meteorology and upper atmospheric research and collaboration between France and India. As to the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, it had adopted various recommendations and its work was a very useful basis which would make it possible

(Mr. Dutt, India)

to expedite the work of the Legal Sub-Committee. However, consensus had yet to be reached on the evaluation of guidelines and criteria on that question, which was why the two Sub-Committees needed to continue their work.

88. India attached particular importance to the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 and supported the reconvening of the relevant working group to consider further ways and means of strengthening international co-operation for the rapid and equitable extension of the benefits of space technology to all nations.

89. India was firmly committed to the peaceful uses of outer space and had frequently expressed its serious concern about the dangers of extending the arms race to outer space and the urgent need to adopt measures to prevent it. The Six-Nation peace and disarmament Initiative, to which India was a party, outlined the steps to be taken in order to avert that danger, including compliance with the provisions of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a complete ban on anti-satellite weapons and an agreement on banning the testing of weapons. COPUOS could continue to play an important role in strengthening the existing legal framework, thus eliminating the danger of an arms race in outer space.

90. In keeping with the spirit of promoting international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space, India was implementing a programme called "SHARES" for sharing its experience in space with the developing countries. The programme provided opportunities for training in various areas relating to outer space, for the participation of scientists and engineers from other developing countries in some of India's current projects and programmes, for joint experiments and the exchange of scientists and engineers, and for assistance and consultancies in specific areas and financial support. India had also made available to interested countries information on the Indian series of remote-sensing satellites.

91. His delegation commended the United States and the USSR on their proposal concerning activities in the context of International Space Year and was pleased to note the emerging plans and consensus in various international organizations on undertaking a number of activities focusing on the theme "Mission to Planet Earth".

92. At the second meeting of the Space Agency Forum for the International Space Year, held in 1989, the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization had proposed a co-operative space mission called "PEACE" (Protection of Environment for Assuring Cleaner Earth) which would involve the placing and use of a polar orbiting satellite equipped to observe and monitor the key environmental parameters. The concept of the "PEACE" mission offered scope for extending multilateral co-operation and improving the participation of many countries, including developing countries.

93. Our planet was faced with the problems of hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, poor housing and environmental pollution, and space technology could contribute to solving them. To that end, it would be useful to analyse impartially each country's requirements for the use of space technology and to establish machinery

(Mr. Dutt, India)

for co-ordinating questions concerning equipment, operations and training, which would constitute a revolutionary approach to the promotion of the peaceful uses of outer space. His delegation believed that the first steps in that direction had been taken and hoped that in the years to come there would be greater co-operation between different countries.

94. Mrs. GAZEAU-SECRET (France), speaking on behalf of the Twelve member countries of the European Community, said that, in connection with the thirtieth anniversary of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, she wished to emphasize the importance the Twelve attached to the development of international co-operation in that field. The work of the Committee in that area was outstanding: it had prepared a series of basic international legal instruments and its activities promoted the exploration and use of space for the benefit of all States. Although only eight of the member States of the European Community were members of the Committee, all of them shared its goals and supported it unreservedly.

95. 1989 also marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the European Space Agency, which had 13 member States, of which 9 belonged to the Community, together with an associated State and another which was a co-operating State. Attention should be drawn to its achievements in the field of research, as well as its applied programmes of earth and microgravity sensing, the Ariane series of launching vehicle programmes and the Hermes project. The Twelve were proud of the important contribution the European Space Agency had made to United Nations activities in the space field.

96. The European Community considered it necessary to reaffirm the indispensability of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space both in elaborating an international law of space and the development of international co-operation projects for the peaceful use of outer space.

97. The Committee's ability to carry out the mandate given to it by the General Assembly was more indispensable than ever because of the increasing diversification of space activities, the steady increase in the number of interested States and the emergence of new problems which required active international co-operation.

98. The Twelve were very satisfied with the results of the twenty-sixth session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and in particular its contributions to the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. They also supported its work of co-ordinating the activities of the various United Nations bodies whose work was connected with outer space as a means of avoiding duplication of effort.

99. In connection with remote sensing, the Twelve were in agreement with the international community that it was necessary to ensure the continuity, compatibility and complementarity of systems, above all in the light of the increasing importance of remote sensing for the developing countries.

100. Thanks to the proposals made by many delegations, the discussion of the use of nuclear energy sources had been very productive. The Twelve were in favour of giving that item priority in the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee.

(Mrs. Gazeau-Secret, France)

101. The twenty-eighth session of the Legal Sub-Committee had also been marked by notable progress, especially in the elaboration of draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear energy sources and the discussion of the new item included in the agenda. The Twelve were satisfied with the compromise proposal approved by the Sub-Committee concerning the method of work to be employed in the consideration of that item.

102. The Twelve hoped that the initiative of proclaiming 1992 International Space Year, which had been adopted by various international scientific organizations, would be successful. They felt that the United Nations should participate in the activities of the Year and play a key part in that respect, particularly through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

103. The Twelve also agreed with the international community that the continued use of outer space for peaceful purposes must be ensured. To that end, they had approved various resolutions intended to avoid the extension of the arms race to space, a theme which, in their view, fell within the competence not of the Committee but of other United Nations bodies.

104. The Twelve welcomed the visible improvement in the international situation and the "consensus spirit" which had had a positive influence on the Committee's discussions. That trend could not but contribute to the strengthening of international co-operation for peaceful purposes in the space field, and the Twelve were prepared to contribute to achieving that goal.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.