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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 12th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Ramirez Carreño . . . . . (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

### Contents

Statement by the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Committee

Other matters

Agenda item 52: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space  
(*continued*)

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

### **Statement by the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Committee**

1. **Mr. Lajčák** (Slovakia), President of the General Assembly, said that the Fourth Committee must both reflect and react to constantly changing conditions on the ground. Although the world had been a very different place when the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had been adopted 57 years earlier, the world envisaged in the Declaration had unfortunately not yet been realized. Thus, as it considered its decolonization items, the Committee must work towards resolving the status of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories in accordance with the principle of self-determination, while also taking into account the concerns of their peoples. Political differences must not distract from that responsibility to the people: their needs on the ground did not change even when there were political impasses over the status of a Territory, and the members of the Committee must find a way to work together for the benefit of the people. A record number of petitioners — 116 — had already addressed the Committee that session, demonstrating the continued relevance of its work.

2. Many anti-personnel landmines, placed during conflicts that had been resolved long ago, continued to pose enormous risks for people even now. The Committee should therefore focus on education and training initiatives in its consideration of the item on assistance in mine action. The item on questions relating to information allowed the Committee to call for fresh perspectives from the international community while it ensured that its own discussions were guided by the most up-to-date information rather than being mired in the past, and that proper channels of communication were maintained with people outside the United Nations.

3. The Fourth Committee must adopt a proactive stance to preventing conflicts and human suffering. Indeed, since 1955, its cooperation with the scientific community when it addressed issues relating to atomic radiation and the peaceful uses of outer space had allowed the General Assembly to develop preventive norms and standards, demonstrating the value of collaboration on policy-making, science, and the law. The Committee also played a vital role in strengthening peacekeeping and special political missions, and it should place even greater emphasis on guaranteeing that United Nations deployments overseas contributed to eliminating the resurgence of conflicts and to sustaining peace.

4. As for the Committee's agenda items relating to the Middle East, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had rightly indicated in his report [A/72/13](#) that the funding for the Agency must be sustainable, predictable and sufficient if it was to perform its crucial work.

### **Other matters**

5. **Mr. Lau** Hak-Fan (Department of Public Information), expressing regret with apologies for the erroneous press release issued on 5 October 2017, said that the mistaken attribution of a statement delivered by Hammada El Baihi to Ahmed Boukhari had occurred owing to the large number of petitioners and last-minute changes to the order in which they spoke. The Department had become aware of the error on 6 October 2017 and had immediately corrected and republished both the French and English language press releases. It had subsequently reinforced its editorial oversight to ensure that such errors would not recur. The Department, which had published 4,100 press releases in 2016 amounting to 18,000 pages, believed that the accuracy and timeliness of its work was of paramount importance.

6. **The Chair**, expressing support for the work of the Department, said that such errors could nonetheless quickly turn into political issues.

**Agenda item 52: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space** (*continued*) ([A/72/20](#); [A/C.4/72/L.2](#), [A/C.4/72/L.3](#), [A/C.4/72/L.4](#) and [A/C.4/72/L.8](#))

7. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft decision on the election of officers nominated for the bureaux of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies for the period 2018–2019 ([A/C.4/72/L.8](#)), submitted by Canada, as Chair of the Working Group of the Whole. Several delegations had expressed surprise that the Fourth Committee had been asked to take action on a decision concerning the election of officers of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). Delegations had also pointed out that the scheduled time frame for taking action on draft proposals under the agenda item, allowing sufficient time to receive instructions from national authorities, had not been respected; and that there was no justification for taking up draft decision [A/C.4/72/L.8](#) before the other draft proposals, since they were generally considered in the order published.

8. The Bureau of the Fourth Committee had met to discuss the highly irregular situation. The Committee

had never taken a decision on the election of officers of COPUOS or its subsidiary bodies. Though it had once adopted a resolution on increasing the membership of COPUOS, the matter at hand was completely different. The Bureau had felt that it was inappropriate and would set a poor precedent for the members of the Fourth Committee to vote on the matter: first, because the Committee had more members than COPUOS did; but especially because every time consensus could not be reached in a subsidiary committee the responsibility for deciding would be passed on to the Committee. Speaking in his personal capacity, he believed that the decision at issue concerned only COPUOS and that therefore the Fourth Committee should not act on the draft decision. According to established practice and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, COPUOS members should be the ones to vote on the composition of its Bureau if they could not reach consensus. He recalled that when his own recent nomination as Chair of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had not garnered consensus, the Special Committee had proceeded to vote on his election, following the correct procedure.

9. Having consulted with various Committee members, he invited the Committee to discuss whether or not it wished to take action on draft decision [A/C.4/72/L.8](#) or relegate it to COPUOS in Vienna.

10. **Ms. Chan** (Canada), asking for clarification as to the capacity in which the Chair had spoken, said that that the draft decision did not ask the Committee to elect specific candidates to the COPUOS Bureau, where a problem had arisen, but merely to confirm the nominees previously chosen by the five regional groups. COPUOS had chosen to bring the draft decision before its parent body, the Fourth Committee, because no consensus had been reached during its own previous session owing to political considerations involved. With the finalization of the Guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE+50), 2018 would be an important year for COPUOS, which therefore needed a functioning Bureau as soon as possible to hold substantive discussions.

11. Her delegation requested clarification on the rules of procedure from the Secretary of the Committee, having originally understood that the draft proposal would be put to a vote in the Committee following the decision taken by the Working Group of the Whole.

12. **The Chair**, insisting that he was merely respecting the requests of various delegations, said that the course of action required by the draft decision was highly unusual and set the poor precedent of a parent body meddling in the operations of its subsidiary body. The Bureau of the Committee had in any case decided that action on the draft decision would not take place on that day, but at a later date when all the other draft proposals were considered.

13. **Mr. González Aninat** (Chile), expressing confusion regarding the procedural details, said that since COPUOS was a subsidiary body of the Fourth Committee, he believed the latter should endorse the candidates selected by the regional groups in Vienna. It was necessary for the problem to be resolved before COPUOS returned to Vienna to prepare for UNISPACE+50.

14. **Ms. Hourmouzios** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation attached great importance to the smooth functioning of COPUOS. As COPUOS could not function without a Bureau, the Fourth Committee must sustain the nominations made by the five regional groups and resolve the matter as efficiently as possible, preferably by means of a vote.

15. **Ms. Chan** (Canada), again requesting clarification from the Secretary of the Committee regarding the relevant rules of procedure, asked why the Fourth Committee was not taking action on a draft decision that had been submitted for a vote by the Working Group of the Whole.

16. **Ms. Sharma** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Committee must now decide how to proceed with action on draft decision [A/C.4/72/L.8](#). In the interest of transparency, the Chair had chosen to convey the concerns expressed to him by a number of Member States.

17. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America) said that after many years of a fixed membership structure, COPUOS had decided to let the five regional groups nominate Bureau candidates as a means of increasing transparency and giving more States the opportunity to occupy the five leadership positions. Amidst a heavy workload, however, COPUOS had been unable to reach consensus on the candidates proposed by the five regional groups; it had thus decided to continue discussions in the Fourth Committee.

18. The draft decision was a document consistent with the practices of COPUOS, which had put forward a slate of candidates every two years for the endorsement of the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly, which had then proceeded to do so. As no substantive objections

had been made to the document, the Committee should take action immediately and move on to other pressing issues. His delegation expressed interest, however, in understanding why consensus had not been reached on the draft decision in COPUOS.

19. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that action should not be taken that day on an essentially procedural draft decision, but on the day originally scheduled for action on all the draft proposals under the agenda item, the following week. The unusual request for the Fourth Committee to make an indirect decision regarding the candidates for the Bureau of COPUOS on whom consensus had not been reached, did not set a good precedent.

20. The Chair said that as the countries which had expressed concern to the Bureau previously were not voicing their opposition to the vote that day, he suggested taking action on the draft decision immediately, preferably by consensus.

21. **Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) said that his delegation objected to taking action that day. Since the Committee had originally been scheduled to act on all the draft proposals the following week, delegations might still be studying the draft decision and the list of speakers had not been exhausted. The Committee should follow the organization of work adopted unanimously earlier in the session. The point was, of course, not to ask for action to be postponed, but rather for the original programme of work to be respected.

22. **Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation had not received copies of the draft decision in a timely fashion and therefore believed that action should be postponed to the later date scheduled in the original programme of work.

23. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation also objected to taking action that day, as it still had not received instructions from its capital. It was not clear why action on the draft decision was so urgently needed. The original programme of work should be respected.

24. **Mr. González Aninat** (Chile) said that as the matter was purely procedural in nature, the draft decision should be adopted immediately so as not to waste the Committee's time. Delegations should not prolong the proceedings.

25. **The Chair** said that out of respect for democratic procedures, he would continue to listen to the concerns of any members who wished to discuss the issue.

26. **Mr. Abbani** (Algeria) said that his delegation had been under the impression that the draft decision would

be discussed the following week; it therefore echoed the calls to postpone voting so that all members could express their positions.

27. **Ms. Radwan** (Saudi Arabia) said that her delegation also supported adhering to the programme of work. The Committee should not waste further time on the topic and should respect what had already been approved.

28. **Mr. Al-Sahhaf** (Iraq) said that his delegation also called for action on the draft decision to be postponed.

29. **Mr. El Hacen** (Mauritania) said that the question of postponement did not arise as the originally scheduled date was the following week: the Committee should simply respect the programme of work.

30. **Mr. Grant** (Canada) said that his delegation had consistently expressed its desire to take action as expeditiously as possible; however, it did not object to respecting the original schedule, and looked forward to taking action on draft decision the following week.

31. **The Chair** said he took it that the Committee wished take action on draft decision [A/C.4/72/L.8](#) on the date indicated in the programme of work.

32. *It was so decided.*

#### *General debate*

33. **Mr. Kazi** (Bangladesh), observing that irrespective of the decision of the Working Group of the Whole that year, consensus remained of paramount importance for COPUOS, said that his delegation advocated a robust international legal regime to govern outer space activities and ensure shared benefits for all. Space science and technology could potentially contribute to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a climate-vulnerable country plagued by frequent natural disasters, Bangladesh continued to benefit from its investment in space research and remote sensing, especially for disaster management, environmental protection, natural resources management and climate change monitoring.

34. With a view to fostering economic growth and the inclusive delivery of public services using information and communications technologies, his Government was aware of the growing importance of joint efforts and investment in space technologies such as satellite communication, earth observation systems and satellite navigation systems. Bangladesh was poised to launch its own communications satellite by the end of 2017. Acknowledging the input of regional and international organizations for national capacity-building, it looked forward to further cooperation with the United Nations

Office for Outer Space Affairs in developing a comprehensive national space policy and corresponding legislation.

35. COPUOS must continue to examine issues relating to the equitable allocation and sharing of space orbits, encourage knowledge and technology transfer, and focus on the constraints faced by the least developed countries with regard to space exploration. An arms race in space must be prevented and consequently a legally binding instrument had to be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. Transparency and confidence-building measures were necessary to promote space security and the sustainability of all space activities. Member States should have common but differentiated responsibilities with regard to mitigating the impact of space debris and minimizing the chance of space collisions. COPUOS should ensure the equitable participation of all States also in all its normative and deliberative work, including those with limited capacity for peaceful space exploration.

36. **Mr. Abdullahi** (Nigeria) said that space technologies were becoming important tools in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in areas such as natural resources management, environmental protection and poverty alleviation. The Goals would also be furthered by the outcome of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (Sendai Framework) and the Paris Agreement on climate change; and as the UNISPACE+50 conference built synergies between space science, technology, policy and law, that would serve to promote space economy, space society, space accessibility and space diplomacy. The work of COPUOS was critical in promoting transparency and confidence-building among States and ensuring that outer space was used for peaceful purposes. Genuine international cooperation and collaboration was also fundamental to guaranteeing the responsible conduct of space activities and the beneficial use of space science and technology.

37. Nigeria hosted a regional support office to promote the activities of the United Nations Platform of Space-Based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) and also the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for English-Speaking African Countries, which had thus far provided postgraduate training to over 200 students from 19 countries. Concomitantly, the Office for Outer Space Affairs had developed courses in global navigation satellite systems and space law at the regional centres for space science and technology. The capacity-building activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and the measures taken by developed nations to enhance the

space technology capacity of developing nations provided unique benefits; and more regional workshops, training courses and exchange programmes should be developed in those fields.

38. **Mr. AlHarbi** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government had concluded agreements on outer space technology and its applications with partners in the United States, China, France and other countries. His country's ambitious national satellite programme aimed to use those applications to further development in the region and beyond. Saudi Arabia complied with the five United Nations treaties on outer space and the vital legislative framework they provided. Strict measures must be taken by the international community to prevent the militarization of outer space by any State.

39. His Government had taken steps to expand domestic use of remote-sensing technologies, communications and geographic information systems and applications pertaining to agriculture, distance education, city planning and other areas. In addition, under the auspices of the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, his Government had conducted an experiment on ultra-violet light emitting diodes aboard the Saudi SAT 4 satellite in cooperation with Stanford University and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); provided space communications and space navigation services to several national bodies; organized a number of youth events as part of World Space Week in October 2016; and hosted an international remote sensing conference in January 2016.

40. Affording every State equal access to outer space, which was the common heritage of humankind, and ensuring equitable and judicious use of the geostationary orbit would help improve living conditions and foster mutual understanding and cooperation among nations.

41. As one of the countries worst affected by climate change and extreme weather, which had resulted in loss of life and property, Saudi Arabia had employed space communications in its early warning system. Space technologies could be used to identify disaster sites, dispatch relief operations expeditiously and contain losses, and they were currently being used to forecast floods.

42. Greater international cooperation was needed to refine and implement space law and to reduce space debris without hindering the progress of developing countries in conducting outer space activities. States should take steps to ensure that space debris was contained and disposed of properly, prohibiting any tests involving the destruction of satellites in any orbit. Even

though it would be difficult to implement, a framework to ensure the safety of nuclear energy sources in outer space had to be developed, in order to restrict their use in surrounding orbits and thereby prevent collisions and pollution in the outer space environment.

43. **Mr. Lim** (Singapore) said that the growing global reliance on space utilization had brought with it such new challenges as space debris and orbital congestion, which called for practical measures to ensure responsible behaviour and security. In the United Nations context alone, spatial applications were crucial to enhancing the safety and security of peacekeepers and civilians; improving situational awareness and monitoring the environmental footprint of peacekeeping operations. States must work together to preserve outer space as a peaceful global commons by establishing an open and inclusive international framework to ensure the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. His Government supported United Nations efforts to that end.

44. Singapore commended the ongoing work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space as a means of advancing the discussions pertaining to a multilateral code of conduct. It also welcomed the inclusive approach taken in the COPUOS working groups by allowing the participation of non-Committee members, as well as the joint ad hoc meeting of the First and Fourth Committees held during the current General Assembly session intended to address challenges to space security and sustainability by facilitating substantive exchanges and improving synergies.

45. Although his country was a nascent player in the space domain, its recently established Office for Space Technology and Industry, taking advantage of the lower research and operational costs now available to small States, had already launched four satellites from India in support of urban planning and disaster management across Southeast Asia. Singapore had also participated actively in an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional workshop on space security, a sign of its commitment to the regional and multilateral efforts to build international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space.

46. **Mr. González Aninat** (Chile) said that at the previous meeting the representative of Switzerland had made a proposal to move gradually towards establishing a customary practice on the peaceful uses of outer space by adopting codes of conduct and other so-called soft laws. In that connection, it was a necessary legal and political distinction to specify that outer space activities must be not merely peaceful but exclusively peaceful.

Through the essentially future-oriented UNISPACE+50 process, States should work towards establishing the fundamental frame of reference for a balanced sustainable development policy whose environmental, economic and social components could be defined using satellite observation. In the modern world, observation and the information obtained through it constituted a natural resource that was critical for many countries that lacked the requisite technological means to capture data that would enable them to advance their human development. The Committee should therefore engage in discussions that would enable it to develop a way of thinking informed by international cooperation among States and other actors, taking into account other factors and topics in addition to article VI 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 (Outer Space Treaty).

47. The Treaty provided for the use of outer space, not its exploitation. In that regard, the Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities did not extend to private sector entities and other important stakeholders, which was a serious deficiency. Furthermore, in the absence of information, it could not be presupposed that an international rule of law prevailed in what was, from scientific, technological, military and other standpoints, a brutally asymmetrical world. Consequently, greater regional and interregional cooperation was required, in order to take into consideration a number of other legal instruments, whether customary norms or binding treaties based on such norms. A thorough review of the legal and political trajectory from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals, for instance, would be necessary in order to identify the important elements, such as natural disasters, climate change and international peace and security, that had been incorporated into the latter framework. Also, there was currently no clearly defined link between articles I and IV of the Outer Space Treaty regarding what the peaceful uses of outer space were; peaceful use entailed not only demilitarization but also prevention of the build-up of weapons or hostile use of satellite technology. Without altering the Outer Space Treaty's fundamental aim of ensuring that all people enjoyed both physical access to outer space and access to its benefits, States must take into consideration the fact that the Treaty was based on the so-called open or evolving clauses, with new elements being incorporated, such as the responsibility to protect.

48. The UNISPACE+50 conference should focus on the new rules emerging in international law concerning both outer space and other questions, making it clear that States Parties to the Treaty should be cognizant of

them as well when carrying on activities in the exploration and use of outer space in accordance with international law.

49. In that connection, greater synchronization and coordinated action among the bodies involved in adopting the multitude of treaties in so many different areas would be welcome. The system could not function effectively without the relevant information in an interconnected and fundamentally asymmetrical world. The particular danger in such a world was that countries with fewer possibilities and greater needs would be more vulnerable to a wide range of threats; but that could be averted by incorporating new interpretations of the Outer Space Treaty and guaranteeing the democratic dissemination of knowledge, thus reconciling the Treaty with patent rights and other issues related to the new technologies of the information society. In other words, in order to reverse the present trend of moving towards a less legally complex approach to the question of outer space, it was necessary to adopt more contemporary codes of conduct and regulations without altering the terms of reference of the Outer Space Treaty.

50. **Mr. Musikhin** (Russian Federation) said that the Committee should keep pace with the pressing need to develop space activities by making a straightforward analysis of the changes taking place, which were informed and complicated by both the objective logic of the multilateral regulation of space activities and the different political strategies and behaviours involved.

51. It was vital to complete the work on the draft Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities satisfactorily in 2018. For over a year, it had seemed that the negotiations had finally been moving along well. His delegation could only regard as disappointing the change in position expressed by some delegations at the recent intersessional meeting of the Working Group on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. By intimating that international regulation of the safety of space operations should be excluded from negotiations, they had effectively nullified an earlier understanding, and would strip any final document of many essential provisions that would allow States to develop a common system of underlying principles. If instead the draft Guidelines expanded sensible safety regulation, it would enable States to address the manifold closely-related issues of space safety and security. Given the immense significance of reliable information on the safety and security situation in the near-Earth orbit, Russia had favoured the establishment of a working group of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on space objects and events, and introduced specific proposals regarding its scope. Establishing the working group would, however, make

sense only if an agreement on key aspects of the safety of space operations was reached in 2018.

52. As far back as 2014, the Committee had recognized the feasibility of an in-depth review of the principles and norms pertaining to the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes, but, giving only rushed consideration to that priority agenda item, it had failed to take any action. It was high time for States to demonstrate the political will to act thoughtfully and pragmatically on the issue. In that context, the Committee should take up his delegation's proposal that it consider space safety and security issues from the perspective of the different interpretations of the right of self-defence in outer space. States could gradually determine what constituted dangerous practices and hostile intentions and actions in outer space, bearing in mind that the sole presumption of such intentions, and not the criteria set out in Article 51 of the Charter, might give certain States reason to resort to self-defence in accordance with their doctrines.

53. As things stood, no convincing set of proposals existed that would provide for a reasonable or realistic formulation of an internationally integrated concept of space traffic management. It would not be possible for the Committee to move to support space traffic management regulation without first drafting and implementing adequate regulation of the safety of space operations. Even hypothetically, any new space traffic management regulation would entail a broad paradigm shift as to its potential implications. A truly international space traffic management regime would require interaction among all sovereign States, with all of them competent to make decisions on the conduct of outer space operations. That would clearly require, as a prerequisite, the establishment of a globally shared information platform under the aegis of the United Nations that furnished a large amount of data on space objects and events.

54. Because some States were now denying the need to regulate the safety of space operations, it was dubious that the very notion of global space management had any validity. The self-interested approach of certain States to regulating space activities vitiated the original meaning of national non-appropriation of outer space and celestial bodies; some now arrogated to themselves the right to authorize their own or other companies to engage in commercial recovery of space resources. Such unilateralism could lead other States, in turn, to redefine norms established under the Outer Space Treaty and take unilateral actions of their own. Before long the claim could be made that the Treaty governed the activities of States in outer space but was inadequate to guide those of private companies.



55. One particular State's attempts to exert exclusive dominance in space, as in other areas of international relations, inevitably influenced the manner in which other States formulated their space policies, diminishing the ability of countries to communicate effectively on issues of space security. Such national political directives must be adjusted if Member States were truly serious about transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

56. **Mr. Ilnytskyi** (Ukraine) said that the strategic role of COPUOS in shaping international standards for space activities should be strengthened and that there should be greater coordination between Member States and the United Nations system on space science and technology. International cooperation and the active engagement of all countries were vital to ensure the sustainability of outer space activities, and to prevent the militarization of outer space.

57. The increase in the number of space-faring nations, the privatization of outer space activities and a host of other developments presented the space community with new challenges, which were compounded by the failure of the existing regulatory regime to address the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. COPUOS must adapt accordingly and find appropriate solutions by establishing new principles and guidelines. It was imperative to begin discussions on a new comprehensive, legally binding instrument that would combine the five existing outer space treaties and include additional provisions regulating modern trends in outer space activities.

58. Space technology constituted an indispensable tool for long-term sustainable development, and UN-SPIDER was extremely important as a means of enhancing international cooperation in disaster management and emergency response by providing greater access to and use of space-based services for all countries. Satisfying progress had been made by the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems towards achieving compatibility and interoperability among global and regional space-based positioning, navigation and timing systems.

59. Ukraine, an advocate of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, had engaged in fruitful dialogue and practical cooperation with other Member States, including the United States and Kazakhstan. In addition, his Government's cooperation with the European Union on space exploration was being expanded.

60. **Mr. Jaime Calderón** (El Salvador) said that the use of outer space provided an opportunity to strengthen technical and human capacities and contribute to

sustainable development in a manner that benefited all countries, particularly those lacking space technology. The countries with well-developed exploration capacities should therefore share their knowledge. Fifty years after the entry into force of the Outer Space Treaty, its 104 ratifications attested to the universal scope of the principles that governed outer space activities.

61. The benefits of space technology would be crucial to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was necessary to reinforce the mandate of COPUOS to ensure that all nations reaped those benefits. In that connection, the UNISPACE+50 conference would provide an opportunity to adopt measures that renewed and consolidated the priorities of the outer space agenda. Preventing the militarization of outer space was an essential part of making the utilization of outer space sustainable over the long term, an objective that COPUOS must make it a priority to promote.

62. El Salvador hoped to use space technology more actively in its efforts to adapt to climate change, especially in its areas of greatest environmental vulnerability, such as water resources, agriculture, forestry and coastal protection. It intended to apply space science and technology to the management of natural disasters, environmental protection, tele-health care and tele-education with a view to advancing the nation's human, economic and social development. To that end, it had assembled a team of representatives of various institutions and ministries to serve as a counterpart to COPUOS.

63. The implementation by UN-SPIDER of the project to strengthen early warning systems for drought and its adoption of measures to prevent and mitigate disasters had been very useful. A training workshop had been conducted jointly by his Government and UN-SPIDER in July 2017, with a view to the establishment of a national technical group on disasters that would compile data on drought and flooding to inform the adoption of best practices by the country's environmental agencies.

64. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that the international community should take measures to prevent outer space from becoming the next setting for an arms race, since such a militarization would be a major threat to humanity. The only means of prevention was to adopt international legal norms specifically prohibiting the placement of weapons — particularly nuclear weapons — in outer space. Member States should negotiate and adopt a legal instrument regulating the peaceful uses of outer space, after constructive dialogue among the COPUOS, its Legal Subcommittee and the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference



must play a primary role in preventing the militarization of outer space, and the draft Treaty submitted to the Conference by the Russian Federation and China provided a sound basis for negotiations.

65. As a limited natural resource at risk of saturation, the geostationary orbit must be utilized in a rational, efficient and economical manner, in accordance with the instruments governing its use. Furthermore, its use should not be restricted by the unbridled commercialization of outer space by some States and private actors, especially in view of the fact that outer space activities must serve to advance global sustainable development. Given its exceptional potential for access to information and communications, the geostationary orbit could assist developing countries in carrying out social programmes, disseminating knowledge and providing medical assistance. The issue should therefore be kept on the Legal Subcommittee's agenda in order to ensure the sustainability of the geostationary orbit.

66. Noting with concern the large volume of work pending on the agenda of the Working Group on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and the limited time remaining for it to complete its work, he stressed the need to clear that backlog in order to facilitate the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft Guidelines by 2018.

67. Although all States had the right to the peaceful use of outer space, that remained a pipe dream for most developing countries. International cooperation was thus all the more urgent, particularly in the areas of information exchange, capacity-building and technology transfer, in order to enable developing countries to use space technologies to promote their social and economic development. Despite the cruel economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on his country by the United States, Cuba attached growing importance to the space sciences and their application and was steadily developing its space research and applications capacities, particularly in fields such as meteorology, the forecasting of natural disasters and risk assessment. Access to the benefits of space technology and applications must be distributed more equally among States in order to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*