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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)**

**Summary record of the 11th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 26 October 1998, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman*: Mr. Macedo ..... (Mexico)

## Contents





98-81877 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 82: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space** (*continued*) (A/53/20, A/53/265, A/C.4/53/8)

1. **The Chairman** drew attention to the Concepción Declaration (A/C.4/53/8), adopted at the Regional Preparatory Conference for the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) held in Concepción, Chile earlier in the month.

2. **Mr. Hong Je Ryong** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his Government attached great significance to the development of space technology and had established its own space industry: an artificial satellite had recently been successfully launched, and further accomplishments were imminent. Every State had a legitimate right to develop its own space programmes to suit its particular situation, and it was regrettable that a few countries still took a suspicious view of developing countries' efforts in that connection, even, on occasion, alleging that they threatened international peace and security. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea considered that, on the contrary, it could best contribute to the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space by enhancing its own space capability. Due attention should, of course, be given to preventing an arms race in outer space.

3. Outer space was part of the common heritage of mankind, and international cooperation should serve to promote the application of space technology for the well-being of all. It was therefore to be hoped that space-related workshops, training courses and the like for the developing countries would continue to be organized in the context of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

4. **Ms. Escobar** (Mexico) commended the work done by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). Its report pointed the way ahead for international cooperation in space. Space science offered various potentially useful spin-off benefits in such fields as environmental protection, information technology and exploration of the solar system, and Mexico supported its development for the economic, social and cultural benefit of all humanity. International scientific research in the field of space technology, properly applied, could serve the sustainable development of the developing countries. Among those applications, her Government attached particular importance to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about the earth, the use of "K" waves, experimental satellites for cartography and communications, health (especially what was known as "telemedicine"), education, the study of climate change and the investigation of such phenomena as El Niño, search and rescue at sea, the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, and environmental monitoring. Accordingly, her Government had participated actively in the work of COPUOS and proposed to continue to do so in the future. It was looking forward to UNISPACE III. It was also establishing, jointly with Brazil, a regional centre for space education serving Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. **Mr. Islam** (Pakistan) noted with satisfaction that COPUOS had done excellent work in promoting cooperation among the Member States in the field of the exploration and peaceful use of outer space. Significant progress had been made in implementing the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), and there was every reason to look forward hopefully to UNISPACE III as a prospective major turning-point which would establish new parameters of cooperation in space technology and the sharing of its benefits.

6. It was to be hoped that further progress would be made on space debris mitigation measures and the enforcement of the international legal framework governing space activities. The potential spin-off benefits of space technology were considerable, and those benefits must be fairly shared, without discrimination towards States that lacked their own space capability. States with such capability had a special responsibility for promoting international cooperation in the exploration and peaceful use of outer space. A comprehensive convention to prevent an arms race in outer space was essential, and there again the States with substantial space capability had a crucial role to play.

7. Pakistan had made considerable achievements in space science and technology development, notably in the fields of environmental monitoring, upper atmosphere research, satellite remote sensing, satellite design, manufacture and launching, including both low-earth-orbit satellites and satellites in geosynchronous orbit, satellite tracking, telemetry and remote control, ground receiving stations, and instrumentation and software development.

8. **Mr. Zaki** (Egypt) noted that COPUOS had been founded 40 years previously and that it had rendered invaluable service in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space and in developing a regime of law governing that region. COPUOS would undoubtedly continue to foster regional and international cooperation in the development of space technology and its application to a broad range of peaceful ends.

9. Egypt, aware of the potential benefits of space science, had recently established a national council for space research and technology, with a view to applying advances in those areas to its objectives of its national development.

10. It was heartening that significant progress had been made in implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, especially in fields that were of particular interest to developing countries, such as the organization of workshops and seminars on advanced applications of space science and technology and the establishment of regional training centres. The development of indigenous capabilities in developing countries continued to be an important aim. Much remained to be done in other areas as well, and accordingly his delegation wished to emphasize that Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations operating in the field of outer space should make every effort to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

11. **Mr. Hae Jin Chun** (Republic of Korea) commended the work of COPUOS over the previous 40 years, including the leading role it had played in the establishment of a legal regime on space-related issues. UNISPACE III, preparations for which were proceeding satisfactorily, would provide a useful opportunity to review progress since UNISPACE 82 and strengthen multilateral cooperation in the field of outer space. In his delegation's view, UNISPACE III should be a global forum in which non-governmental organizations and the private sector would participate alongside Governments and international organizations, as both had significant roles to play in the important area of space science and technology development. The Republic of Korea was committed to active participation in the work of preparing for UNISPACE III. It also wished to become a full member of COPUOS.

12. **Mr. Apunte** (Ecuador) expressed satisfaction at the progress of preparations for UNISPACE III, which promised to give further impetus to international cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space. Such cooperation deserved priority because, as the General Assembly had noted in its resolution 52/56, the benefits of space technology should be disseminated to all countries, especially developing countries.

13. While the private sector was playing a steadily growing role in the application of space technology to economic development, space-related activities were no longer the exclusive preserve of a few countries, but were becoming a means of drawing nations together and affording fresh opportunities for international cooperation. Accordingly, it was important to ensure that the resulting benefits were not monopolized by a few countries or a few private firms. That would be a violation of the Outer Space Treaty, which emphasized the principle of cooperation and required the interests of other States to be taken duly into account.

14. He welcomed the agreement by Mexico and Brazil to establish a space science and technology training centre, which would undoubtedly help to meet the needs and interests of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

15. The question of the geostationary orbit was of considerable importance in the context of the fair and rational use of outer space for the benefit of all countries, especially developing countries. In that connection, the documents submitted by the Czech Republic and Colombia contained much valuable material which would be useful for the purposes of the establishment of a special legal regime governing outer space.

16. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America) said that his delegation continued to believe that in establishing COPUOS, the General Assembly had intended that Committee to concern itself exclusively with promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of space, and that the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament were the competent multilateral forums for discussion of the disarmament aspects of outer space. He reiterated his delegation's support for the decision by COPUOS to meet in an expanded session in 1999, known as UNISPACE III, to consider space benefits for mankind in the twenty-first century. That session had been organized in such a way as to guarantee that its goals would be achieved within the existing resources of COPUOS and its secretariat. The organizational structure of UNISPACE III should serve as a model for the rest of the United Nations when planning similar conferences, and the work of the Office of Outer Space Affairs in preparing for UNISPACE III should make the event a great success. However, the United States was deeply concerned that the senior leadership of the Office might be changed in 1998. In the light of the central role to be played by it in deliberations on a range of issues of great importance to the future of space exploration, it was only fitting that the views of Member States on actions affecting its leadership should be fully taken into account.

17. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) said that UNISPACE III would afford a unique opportunity for the international community to appraise accomplishments in the peaceful uses of outer space as well as collective efforts to promote international cooperation in that field for the benefit of all humanity. His delegation was pleased to note that priority consideration had been given to the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, although the Working Group of the Whole of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee continued to be

affected by a lack of sound financial support. Indonesia reiterated its call for all States, particularly those with space capabilities, to continue and increase their contributions to the Working Group.

18. The choice of space-based meteorology as the focus of the thirty-fifth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had been most appropriate; cooperation and free information exchange in that field should be strengthened in order to increase its beneficial adaptation to the needs of individual countries. His delegation also welcomed the continued priority consideration of the problem of space debris, and called for intensified cooperation among member States in formulating effective strategies to minimize the potential impact of space debris on future space missions as well as to protect the terrestrial environment.

19. Indonesia welcomed the continued priority given to consideration of the definition and delimitation of outer space and the utilization of the geostationary orbit in the Legal Subcommittee, and stressed the need for genuine negotiations on the establishment of a legal regime governing the use of the geostationary orbit which would ensure equitable access to that limited resource. COPUOS was the appropriate body to elaborate such a legal regime, while the International Telecommunications Union was the relevant agency for dealing with the technical aspects of the geostationary orbit.

20. He stressed the importance of access to advanced space technology for developing countries, in order that those countries might better meet their development needs and thus make even greater contributions to global sustainable development. It was also important to take into account the views and needs of developing countries in considering the current international legal instruments governing outer space, with a view to focusing current space applications programmes towards promoting greater equity in meeting the interests of the developing countries.

21. **Mr. Dausá** (Cuba) said that the concept of outer space as the common heritage of mankind comprised three fundamental principles to be observed by all States.

22. The first, which was the cornerstone of the work of COPUOS, was the need to reserve outer space for purely peaceful uses, and to promote international cooperation in the use of outer space for those purposes, taking into account the need to maintain continued economic growth and sustainable development for all countries, especially developing countries. As the new millennium approached, it was necessary to reduce the enormous gulf that separated the great majority of developing countries from the developed countries in the area of space science and technology.

23. The second principle, of equal importance, was based on the need to prevent an arms race in outer space. In that regard, the Cuban delegation wished to make clear its objection to the obstruction, by some nuclear Powers with their own space programmes, of progress in the Conference on Disarmament towards an agreement or international instrument preventing arms races in outer space.

24. The third principle involved the logic of space law. Cuba shared the view that the international instruments currently in force with regard to outer space were inadequate to prevent an arms race there, and that effective and verifiable new measures were needed to enforce the exclusively peaceful use of outer space.

25. UNISPACE III would be of particular importance for promoting more dynamic, harmonious and equitable international cooperation in the field of outer space, and the recent Latin American and Caribbean regional conference had undertaken valuable preparatory work for that event. However, greater attention needed to be paid to the problem of space object collisions and space debris, and existing technology for monitoring such debris needed to be improved.

26. **Mr. Tarabrin** (Russian Federation) said that the work of COPUOS needed to reflect more adequately the increasingly universal importance of the peaceful uses of outer space. His delegation could not agree with the proposal to reduce the status of COPUOS and its subcommittees, or to transfer its function of developing legal principles governing outer space to other technical organizations and forums, as doing so would have a negative impact on all international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. While the work of COPUOS needed reform, there was also a need to preserve the principle of consensus decision-making in that Committee and its subsidiary bodies.

27. UNISPACE III should be a non-politicized showcase for the space achievements of all the countries of the world, demonstrating the economic benefits of space technology and contributing to practical, equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation in outer space. The successful development of international cooperation in space at the regional and bilateral levels, and providing a long-term legal foundation for that cooperation, could not substitute for the progressive development and adaptation of the universal norms and principles governing such cooperation.

28. **Mr. Acosta Fragachan** (Venezuela) said that his delegation welcomed the work of COPUOS, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Working Group of the Whole on implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, especially with regard to the preparation of scholarship programmes to support in-depth training courses in advanced

space science and technology and the establishment of regional space science and technology study centres in developing countries.

29. His delegation was also encouraged by the work being undertaken to prepare for UNISPACE III, in particular the regional preparatory conferences already held or planned for the immediate future. It welcomed the contribution of COPUOS to strengthening international instruments governing the peaceful uses of outer space, by means of the creation of norms and principles regulating space exploration and keeping it free of the contradictions entailed by the arms race.

30. He reiterated the importance of the topic of space debris, as well as his concern regarding the problem of collisions of space objects. His delegation awaited the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in that regard.

*The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.*