SSUNS Position Paper

Committee: UNOOSA-ICAO Joint Session
Country: France
Scotty Andrade
Upper Canada College

Topic 1: The Environment and Space Activity

Space exploration is a very new concept for mankind with our history in space being limited to just under 60 years. France has taken a lead role in the international community in the past in this push to learn more about space with France being the sixth nation to field a satellite. In the past 60 years there has been rapid growth in the space industry with there being an increase emphasis by many nations to bolster their space programs. Currently there is around 1,100 operational satellites in outer space and often around 50 people living in the International Space Station at a time. All figures point to an increased human presence in space in the near future and with this will come with a variety of issues with the environment and as well as grey areas in our ability to manage the exploration of space, of which France believes need to be addressed.

One of the key issues France believes needs be addressed currently in our exploration of space is the increased amount Black Carbon that will be emitted into the atmosphere. Black carbon is emitted by the incomplete combustion of the fuel used in rockets. When it is in the atmosphere, like the enhanced greenhouse effect, Black Carbon absorbs the sun's light and traps thermal energy into the atmosphere. France strongly believes that the issue of Black Carbon needs to be addressed and we suggest two methods. 1) Encourage investment and research into more environmentally friendly rocket fuels that will have a lesser impact on the environment. 2) Set international standards for all Space launches where all nations enforce policies that protect the environment and limit the amount of pollution launches can emit.

Another key environmental issue that France believes needs to be addressed is the issue of Space Debris with there being around half a million pieces of debris orbiting around Earth that pose harm to all spacecraft and raises issues for the future with future space launches only adding further debris. This poses an issue for future space exploration where the increased amount of debris will make space increasingly more dangerous for travel. To deal with the current issues with space debris France believes that the international community should take a more unified approach to tackling the issue. This will be the only way to overcome the legal issues surrounding the cleanup of space debris where there is the dilemma that a country cannot remove another bodies space debris as a result of it still being the countries property under international law. Only with a unified approach will we start to be able to fix our current issue of space debris. To limit the future debris emitted into space, France believes the international community should adopt our law on Space Operations which forces French launch providers to direct the upper stage of their rockets into trajectories that will cause them to disintegrate directly after launch, reducing the amount of debris in space.

Topic 2: The Militarization of Space and International Law

With the ever increasing importance outer space will play in the future, countries are constantly wanting to increase their presence in space every day. This increased presence is usually for the purpose to better mankind however there also is strategic value of having an increased stake in outerspace. As seen in the Gulf War, considered the first space war, there was a heavy reliance on space assets for various forms of strategy. It is very obvious of the importance of space in future warfare and this makes it ever more important to ensure that no nation or nations have a majority control of space through militarization. Since space is classified directly in the Outer Space Treaty as "common heritage of mankind", France recognizes how this ideal can directly be effected through uncontrolled militarization of which could escalate space into a militaristic front.

The militarization of space has occurred ever since mankind first started launching satellites into outer space. Satellites give militaries various benefits allowing them to act faster in all of their objectives. This militarization of space has not just benefited the military but has also had a great benefit on society where satellites have many other uses that are important to society today such as the internet. However, it is the extreme militarization, weapanization, that is of Frances most concern, and although currently space is not weaponized, with there being no weapons in orbit, various nations namely USA, Russia and China are all developing offensive technology under the excuse of developing anti-satellite technology (ASAT). Although France does not want to deter the expansion and use of outer space, France strongly believes that we have to ensure that these advances do not turn outer space into a warzone with the potential debris these technologies could cause would render space unusable. That is why France suggests the development of a unified international approach at combating this issue where we clearly define what technology is allowed to be developed and technology that will not be allowed in space.

Another key issue that France wants to change with the current laws in space is their general ambiguity. For example, in the future if an astronaut were sent to space for a militaristic mission, they would be classified as envoys of mankind as stated in the outer space treaty and they would also be entitled to protection, aid and assistance at all times as stated under the 1968 rescue agreement. However, under international law both of these ideas would not be true and this causes a grey area between what is stated in international law and in the space treaties formed years ago. France believes it is time to update these laws to take into account our present ideas about the future of space and although there is still the Martens Clause that will somewhat fill the void in figuring out what is ethically justifiable, France suggests that the international community established a strict set of laws that clearly outlines the humanitarian laws in space so that all the gaps in our current system will be filled.

Topic 3: Space Commercialization

Overtime, as the idea of exploring space has become more relevant, people are trying to get ahead and determine how to commercialize the space industry. The commercialization of space will become increasingly more prominent in the future with us already seeing the establishment of commercial space flights with the Virgin Galactic flights out of Spaceport America. In the future there will be more companies trying to find a way to make money in the space industry with there being ideas such as asteroid mining and reusable rockets already. With so many firms thinking of revolutionary ideas of how we can use space it makes it more important for the nations of the world to have the necessary procedures in place to facilitate the development in an structured procedure, with the great importance these ideas will have for our future.

France strongly believes that all nations should be looking at how they can expand their horizons to outer space and try to find ways that the resources of outer space can please various human needs. As technology becomes increasingly more advanced and with the possibility of human life living sustainably outside of earth is more plausible, it is very important that the international community will always have a presence in space. With the International Space Station currently projected to run until 2024, it is ever important that we not only continue humankinds existence in space but also expand our horizons with the Lunar Village that the European Space Agency is championing to create in 2030. This proposed village is the ideal successor for the international space station and France strongly believes that we should unite the world space efforts to get behind the idea of the Lunar Village, as we did with the International Space Station, instead of peeling of into various programs after the International Space Station's time is up.

One of the key issues that many believe will prevent mankind from living in space is the issue in how to produce energy. The most prominent idea advocated, is the idea of asteroid mining that France believes is our best opportunity at being able to create energy from space. With there already being established companies such as Planetary Resources and Deep Space Industries in the market France strongly believes all nations should explore whether this an an attainable goal. The key issue though is that the prospect of Asteroid mining contradicts the Outer Space Treaty which states the moon, asteroids, and other celestial bodies "is not subject to national appropriation by claims of sovereignty." The USA has taken steps to allows companies to take extra-terrestrial resources for profit with the Space Act but it still contradicts the Outer Space Treaty. This is why France strongly believes we should reform the Outer Space Treaty to allow certain celestial bodies, asteroids, to be claimed by nations and firms, however still with a necessary framework in place to ensure no company or nation gains to much control over the resources.

References

1. De Selding, Peter B. "French Debris-mitigation Law Could Pose Issue for Arianespace - SpaceNews.com." SpaceNews.com. N.p., 10 Apr. 2014. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
2. Dickinson, David. "Spotting Asterix: France Marks 50 Years of Space Exploration - Universe Today." Universe Today. N.p., 23 Dec. 2015. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
3. Falk, Tyler. "7 Ideas to Solve the Space Junk Problem | ZDNet." ZDNet. N.p., 14 Jan. 2014. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
4. Ferreira, Becky. "How to Prevent Space War." Motherboard. N.p., 16 Sept. 2015. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
5. Garcia, Mark. "Space Debris and Human Spacecraft." NASA. NASA, 26 Sept. 2013. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.
6. Samuel, Henry. "European Space Agency Unveils 'lunar Village' Plans as Stepping Stone to Mars." The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, 15 Jan. 2016. Web. 05 Nov. 2016.