



General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 November 2013

Original: English

Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 50

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-eighth session the item entitled “International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space” and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).
2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 12th, 13th and 19th meetings, on 22 and 23 October and 1 November 2013 (see [A/C.4/68/SR.12](#), 13 and 19).
3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space ([A/68/20](#)).
4. At its 2nd meeting, on 3 October, the Committee decided to establish a Working Group of the Whole on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, chaired by the delegation of Japan, to prepare proposals to be submitted under the item.
5. At the 12th meeting, on 22 October, the Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space introduced the report of that Committee (see [A/C.4/68/SR.12](#)).



II. Consideration of proposals

A. Draft resolution [A/C.4/68/L.2](#)

6. At the 19th meeting, on 1 November, the representative of Japan, in his capacity as representative of the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole, introduced a draft resolution entitled “Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space” ([A/C.4/68/L.2](#)).

7. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

8. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution [A/C.4/68/L.2](#) without a vote (see para. 12, draft resolution I).

B. Draft resolution [A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1](#)

9. At the 19th meeting, on 1 November, the representative of Japan, in his capacity as representative of the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole, introduced a draft resolution entitled “International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space” ([A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1](#)).

10. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

11. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution [A/C.4/68/L.3/Rev.1](#) without a vote (see para. 12, draft resolution II).

III. Recommendations of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

12. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution I Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space

The General Assembly,

Emphasizing the importance of appropriate means of ensuring that outer space is used for peaceful purposes and that the obligations under international law and those specifically contained in the United Nations treaties on outer space¹ are implemented,

Recalling its resolutions [59/115](#) of 10 December 2004 on the application of the concept of the “launching State” and [62/101](#) of 17 December 2007 on recommendations on enhancing the practice of States and international intergovernmental organizations in registering space objects,

Taking note of the work of the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the report of its Working Group on National Legislation Relevant to the Peaceful Exploration and Use of Outer Space on the work conducted under its multi-year workplan,²

Noting that nothing in the conclusions of the Working Group or in the present recommendations constitutes an authoritative interpretation or a proposed amendment to the United Nations treaties on outer space,

Observing that, in view of the increasing participation of non-governmental entities in space activities, appropriate action at the national level is needed, in particular with respect to the authorization and supervision of non-governmental space activities,

Noting the need to maintain the sustainable use of outer space, in particular by mitigating space debris, and to ensure the safety of space activities and minimize the potential harm to the environment,

Recalling the provisions contained in the United Nations treaties on outer space with respect to providing information, to the greatest extent feasible and

¹ Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 672, No. 9574); Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 961, No. 13810); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1023, No. 15020); and Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1363, No. 23002).

² A/AC.105/C.2/101.

practicable, on the activities carried out in outer space, in particular through registration of objects launched into outer space,

Noting the need for consistency and predictability with regard to the authorization and supervision of space activities and the need for a practical regulatory system for the involvement of non-governmental entities to provide further incentives for enacting regulatory frameworks at the national level, and noting that some States also include national space activities of a governmental character within that framework,

Recognizing the different approaches taken by States in dealing with various aspects of national space activities, namely by means of unified acts or a combination of national legal instruments, and noting that States have adapted their national legal frameworks according to their specific needs and practical considerations and that national legal requirements depend to a high degree on the range of space activities conducted and the level of involvement of non-governmental entities,

Recommends the following elements for consideration, as appropriate, by States when enacting regulatory frameworks for national space activities, in accordance with their national law, taking into account their specific needs and requirements:

1. The scope of space activities targeted by national regulatory frameworks may include, as appropriate, the launch of objects into and their return from outer space, the operation of a launch or re-entry site and the operation and control of space objects in orbit; other issues for consideration may include the design and manufacture of spacecraft, the application of space science and technology, and exploration activities and research;
2. The State, taking into account its obligations as a launching State and as a State responsible for national activities in outer space under the United Nations treaties on outer space, should ascertain national jurisdiction over space activities carried out from territory under its jurisdiction and/or control; likewise, it should issue authorizations for and ensure supervision over space activities carried out elsewhere by its citizens and/or legal persons established, registered or seated in territory under its jurisdiction and/or control, provided, however, that if another State is exercising jurisdiction with respect to such activities, the State should consider forbearing from duplicative requirements and avoid unnecessary burdens;
3. Space activities should require authorization by a competent national authority; such authority or authorities, as well as the conditions and procedures for granting, modifying, suspending and revoking the authorization, should be set out clearly within the regulatory framework; States might employ specific procedures for the licensing and/or for the authorization of different kinds of space activities;
4. The conditions for authorization should be consistent with the international obligations of States, in particular under the United Nations treaties on outer space, and with other relevant instruments, and may reflect the national security and foreign policy interests of States; the conditions for authorization should help to ascertain that space activities are carried out in a safe manner and to minimize risks to persons, the environment or property and

that those activities do not lead to harmful interference with other space activities; such conditions could also relate to the experience, expertise and technical qualifications of the applicant and could include safety and technical standards that are in line, in particular, with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;³

5. Appropriate procedures should ensure continuing supervision and monitoring of authorized space activities by applying, for example, a system of on-site inspections or a more general reporting requirement; enforcement mechanisms could include administrative measures, such as the suspension or revocation of the authorization, and/or penalties, as appropriate;

6. A national registry of objects launched into outer space should be maintained by an appropriate national authority; operators or owners of space objects for which the State is considered to be the launching State or the State responsible for national activities in outer space under the United Nations treaties on outer space should be requested to submit information to the authority to enable the State on whose registry such objects are carried to submit the relevant information to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in accordance with applicable international instruments, including the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space,⁴ and in consideration of General Assembly resolutions 1721 B (XVI) of 20 December 1961 and [62/101](#) of 17 December 2007; the State may also request information on any change in the main characteristics of space objects, in particular when they have become non-functional;

7. States could consider ways of seeking recourse from operators or owners of space objects if their liability for damage under the United Nations treaties on outer space has become engaged; in order to ensure appropriate coverage for damage claims, States could introduce insurance requirements and indemnification procedures, as appropriate;

8. Continuing supervision of the space activities of non-governmental entities should be ensured in the event of the transfer of ownership or control of a space object in orbit; national regulations may provide for authorization requirements with regard to the transfer of ownership or obligations for the submission of information on the change in status of the operation of a space object in orbit.

³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/62/20), annex.*

⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1023, No. 15020.

Draft resolution II

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions [51/122](#) of 13 December 1996, [54/68](#) of 6 December 1999, [59/2](#) of 20 October 2004, [61/110](#) and [61/111](#) of 14 December 2006, [62/101](#) of 17 December 2007, [62/217](#) of 22 December 2007, [65/97](#) of 10 December 2010, [65/271](#) of 7 April 2011, [66/71](#) of 9 December 2011 and [67/113](#) of 18 December 2012,

Recognizing the extraordinary achievements made over the past 50 years in human space flight and space exploration for peaceful purposes, and noting the unique platform at the global level for international cooperation in space activities represented by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space,

Deeply convinced of the common interest of all humankind in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space, as the province of all humankind, for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived therefrom, and also of the importance of international cooperation in this field, for which the United Nations should continue to provide a focal point,

Reaffirming the importance of international cooperation in developing the rule of law, including the relevant norms of space law and their important role in international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and of the widest possible adherence to international treaties that promote the peaceful uses of outer space in order to meet emerging new challenges, especially for developing countries,

Seriously concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space, and bearing in mind the importance of article IV 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,¹

Recognizing that all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, should contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Deeply concerned about the fragility of the space environment and the challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, in particular the impact of space debris which is an issue of concern to all nations,

Noting the progress achieved in the further development of peaceful space exploration and applications as well as in various national and cooperative space projects, which contributes to international cooperation, and the importance of further developing the legal framework to strengthen international cooperation in this field,

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843.

Convinced of the need to promote the use of space technology towards implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration² and contributing to the post-2015 development agenda process,

Seriously concerned about the devastating impact of disasters,³

Desirous of enhancing international coordination and cooperation at the global level in disaster management and emergency response through greater access to and use of space-based services for all countries and facilitating capacity-building and institutional strengthening for disaster management, in particular in developing countries,

Deeply convinced that the use of space science and technology and their applications and geospatial information in areas such as tele-health, tele-education, disaster management, environmental protection and other Earth observation applications contribute to achieving the objectives of the global conferences of the United Nations that address various aspects of economic, social and cultural development, particularly poverty eradication,

Welcoming, in that regard, the fact that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, recognized the important role that space science and technology play in promoting sustainable development,⁴

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fifty-sixth session,⁵

1. *Endorses* the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fifty-sixth session;⁵

2. *Agrees* that the Committee, at its fifty-seventh session, should consider the substantive items recommended at its fifty-sixth session,⁶ taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

3. *Notes* that, at its fifty-second session, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee continued its work,⁷ as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution [67/113](#);

4. *Agrees* that the Legal Subcommittee, at its fifty-third session, should consider the substantive items and reconvene the working groups recommended by the Committee,⁸ taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

² Resolution 55/2.

³ The term “disasters” refers to natural or technological disasters.

⁴ Resolution 66/288, annex, para. 274.

⁵ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 352.

⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. II.C; and A/AC.105/1045.

⁸ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*, paras. 251-255.

5. *Urges* States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space⁹ to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to those treaties in accordance with their national law, as well as incorporating them into their national legislation;

6. *Notes* that, at its fiftieth session, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee continued its work,¹⁰ as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/113;

7. *Agrees* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its fifty-first session, should consider the substantive items and reconvene the working groups recommended by the Committee,¹¹ taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

8. *Welcomes with satisfaction* the recommendations for an international response to the near-Earth object impact threat, endorsed by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its fiftieth session and by the Committee at its fifty-sixth session;¹²

9. *Notes with appreciation* that some States are already implementing space debris mitigation measures on a voluntary basis, through national mechanisms and consistent with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee and with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space,¹³ endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/217;

10. *Invites* other States to implement, through relevant national mechanisms, the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;

11. *Considers* that it is essential that States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including those with nuclear power sources, with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, calls for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris, also considers that, to the extent possible, information thereon should be provided to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, and agrees that

⁹ Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 672, No. 9574); Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 961, No. 13810); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1023, No. 15020); and Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1363, No. 23002).

¹⁰ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*, chap. II.B; and A/AC.105/1038.

¹¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*, paras. 181-183.

¹² *Ibid.*, para. 144; and A/AC.105/1038, para. 198, and annex III.

¹³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/62/20)*, annex.

international cooperation is needed to expand appropriate and affordable strategies to minimize the impact of space debris on future space missions;

12. *Urges* all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes;

13. *Endorses* the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for 2014, as proposed to the Committee by the Expert on Space Applications and endorsed by the Committee;¹⁴

14. *Urges* all Member States to continue to contribute to the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Programme on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in order to enhance the capacity of the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat to provide technical and legal advisory services in its priority thematic areas;

15. *Notes with satisfaction* the progress made within the framework of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), and encourages Member States, on a voluntary basis, to provide the programme with the additional resources necessary to ensure that greater support may be provided to Member States by UN-SPIDER and its regional support offices;

16. *Also notes with satisfaction* the continuous progress 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 and in the promotion of the use of global navigation satellite systems and their integration into national infrastructure, particularly in developing countries, and notes with appreciation that the International Committee will hold its eighth meeting in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 10 to 14 November 2013;

17. *Notes with appreciation* that the regional centres for space science and technology education, affiliated to the United Nations, namely, the African regional centres for space science and technology education in the French and English languages, located in Morocco and Nigeria, respectively, the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, located in India, the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, with campuses located in Brazil and Mexico, and the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Western Asia, located in Jordan, have continued their education programmes in 2013, encourages the regional centres to continue to promote greater participation of women in their education programmes, and agrees that the regional centres should continue to report to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on their activities;

18. *Notes with satisfaction* the progress on the establishment of a new regional centre for space science and technology education in Asia and the Pacific located at Beihang University in Beijing, as proposed by the Government of China, in particular the positive conclusion of an evaluation mission to Beihang University facilitated by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in September 2013;

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*, para. 66; and A/AC.105/1031.

19. *Emphasizes* that regional and interregional cooperation in the field of space activities is essential to strengthen the peaceful uses of outer space, assist States in the development of their space capabilities and contribute to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration,² to that end requests relevant regional organizations to offer the assistance necessary so that countries can carry out the recommendations of regional conferences, and in that regard notes the importance of the equal participation of women in all fields of science and technology;

20. *Recognizes*, in that regard, the important role played by conferences and other mechanisms in strengthening regional and international cooperation among States, such as the African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development, the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum, the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization and the Space Conference of the Americas;

21. *Requests* the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, and agrees that during its consideration of the matter the Committee could continue to consider ways to promote regional and interregional cooperation and the role that space technology could play in the implementation of recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development;

22. *Emphasizes* the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to an orderly growth of space activities favourable to sustained economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, including building resilience to reduce the consequences of disasters, in particular in developing countries;

23. *Reiterates* that the benefits of space technology and its applications should continue to be brought to the attention, in particular, of the major United Nations conferences and summits for economic, social and cultural development and related fields and that the use of space technology should be promoted in efforts towards achieving the objectives of those conferences and summits, including implementing the Millennium Declaration and contributing to the post-2015 development agenda process;

24. *Welcomes* the increased efforts to strengthen further the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, and recommends that the abbreviation “UN-Space” be used to refer to the Inter-Agency Meeting to increase its visibility and to further strengthen the role of that inter-agency mechanism, as agreed by the Committee;¹⁵

25. *Urges* entities of the United Nations system, particularly those participating in the Inter-Agency Meeting, to continue to examine, in cooperation with the Committee, how space science and technology and their applications could contribute to implementing the Millennium Declaration and to the post-2015 development agenda process;

¹⁵ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*, para. 317.

26. *Requests* the entities of the United Nations system, other international organizations and the Secretary-General to continue and, where appropriate, to enhance their cooperation with the Committee and to provide it with reports on the issues dealt with in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies;

27. *Endorses* the composition of the bureaux of the Committee and its subcommittees for the period 2014-2015, and reiterates that the Committee and its subcommittees, at their respective sessions in 2014, should elect their officers nominated for that period;¹⁶

28. *Decides* that Belarus and Ghana shall become members of the Committee;¹⁷

29. *Endorses* the decision of the Committee to grant permanent observer status to the Inter-Islamic Network on Space Sciences and Technology;¹⁸

30. *Encourages* the regional groups to promote participation in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies by the States members of the Committee that are also members of the respective regional groups.

¹⁶ Resolution 67/113, paras. 27-29; and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*, paras. 336-339.

¹⁷ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/68/20)*, paras. 340 and 341.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 344.