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85th plenary meeting

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Official Records

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President: Mr. Deiss (Switzerland)

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

Tragedies in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President (*spoke in French*): On Friday, 1 April, a violent attack against the United Nations took place in Mazar-i-Sharif, killing and injuring many staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The day before, a volunteer with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire was shot and killed in Abidjan. I strongly condemn those attacks and express my sincere condolences to the grieving families.

In addition to those attacks, in recent days several United Nations staff members have lost their lives while carrying out their tasks on behalf of the international community, including in the airplane accident in Kinshasa and other tragic circumstances. I believe all of us grieve each time that someone working for the United Nations pays for their commitment with their lives or by being injured. In tribute to the courage and commitment of those men and women who served the United Nations, I now invite the General Assembly to stand and observe a minute of silence.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its

consideration of agenda item 50 at its 62nd plenary meeting, on 10 December 2010. In order to enable the General Assembly to consider the draft resolution before it today, it will be necessary to reopen our consideration of agenda item 50. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of that item?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): Representatives will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2010, the General Assembly allocated agenda item 50 to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). In order for the Assembly to proceed expeditiously on this item, may I take it that the Assembly decides to consider the item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of agenda item 50?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 50 (*continued*)

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Draft resolution (A/65/L.67)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin our consideration of this item by making some opening remarks.

Today more than ever, we cannot ignore what is taking place elsewhere in the world. Everything moves

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faster and everything is closer. For many decades now, the pace of progress made by science and technology has increased unimaginably. We have just had a prime example of that, with three cosmonauts addressing us from outer space. The development of high-speed transport and innovations in information and communication technologies have shortened distances and made us more mobile. The world as well as the risks and challenges we face — to which the United Nations and the international community must respond — have of course become more complex. However, new possibilities and greater benefits for humankind have also emerged.

The first human space flight, whose fiftieth anniversary we commemorate this year, was a landmark in human history and technological progress. The initiative of the delegation of the Russian Federation to propose making 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight will provide us an opportunity to pay tribute both to the courage of Yuri Gagarin and to the individual merit of other Soviet cosmonauts and the team that supported them. This international day could also be a useful opportunity to reflect upon the contribution of this mission to scientific progress.

The venture into space led to developments in such diverse areas as meteorology and agriculture, satellite navigation and telecommunications and biology and physics. Today, such flights last for days and even months, and citizens from various countries are working together in a space station. Crucially, international cooperation also occurs in outer space. That is especially important for us at the United Nations.

The international community should ensure that outer space is explored and used for peaceful purposes. This is one of the hallmark activities of the United Nations. In that connection, I would like to commend the commitment of Member States and the efforts of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

It is said that during his flight aboard *Vostok-1*, Yuri Gagarin marvelled that our planet was blue. We on Earth know that this effect is produced by the many oceans, seas, forests, mountains, glaciers and a plethora of other natural treasures. It is our collective responsibility both to ensure that, seen from the skies, our Earth remains blue and that we use our natural resources in a measured and sustainable manner.

I wish to underscore the important contribution made by space exploration in that regard. Technologies developed through space exploration are employed in such diverse areas as the fight against global warming, desertification and biodiversity loss. By way of example, satellite imagery is making an essential contribution to assessing the risk of natural disasters.

The positive effects of the use of outer space are substantial. It is essential that we ensure that as many people as possible can benefit from that, and international cooperation is instrumental to that end. I therefore encourage members to pursue and intensify the efforts of the United Nations for the peaceful uses of outer space. It is in that spirit that I call on members to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's achievement.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.67.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me first to share with the members of the Assembly an address by the President of the Russian Federation.

"I welcome participants in the special meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly devoted to the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight.

"Russia is rightly proud of the fact that the first and the most decisive step in the exploration of outer space was taken on 12 April 1961 by our compatriot, Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin. His flight became one of the most striking and significant events of the twentieth century, starting a new chapter in the history of mankind.

"In the past 50 years, space has become a special area of foremost achievements. Those include space walks, the establishment of orbital space stations, where various scientific and technological experiments are carried out, and flights to other planets. Equally important, outer space has become a platform for close, open and fruitful international cooperation to the benefit of universal peace and development.

"Large-scale multilateral programmes and projects, namely, Apollo-Soyuz, Intercosmos and Shuttle-Mir, have been carried out within the framework of that cooperation. The International

Space Station is working successfully. The day 12 April, celebrated every year in Russia as Cosmonautics Day, is a tribute to the joint success in the exploration of the universe, the courage and boldness of its brave conquerors and many years of work by scientists, designers and engineers. From now on, it will be a universally recognized commemorative day — the International Day of Human Space Flight.

“I am sure that multilateral cooperation in the exploration and use of space for peaceful purposes will extend to an increasing number of countries and will promote joint efforts to find solutions to global problems and the scientific and technical progress of civilization. As Sergey Korolev, a leading spacecraft designer, said, ‘the future of cosmonautics has no limits and its prospects are as infinite as the universe itself’.

“I wish the meeting’s participants fruitful work and all the best.”

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have gathered here today to mark a very important milestone in the history not only of our country but, without any exaggeration, of all mankind. On 12 April 1961 the road to new heights, namely, man’s exploration of outer space, was opened.

Broad interest in outer space arose as a result of the launch in 1957 by the Soviet Union of the first artificial satellite and grew with every new achievement and development in space technology. News of the human space flight was met with particular enthusiasm. Not only at home but throughout the world, Yuri Gagarin became the embodiment of humanity’s achievements.

Already at the beginning of the space age, it became clear that the exploration of outer space was not possible without cooperation among States and the drafting of rules and laws for peaceful cooperation. The role of the United Nations as a forum to discuss all aspects of cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space has always been invaluable.

In 1959, the United Nations reacted to developing trends by establishing the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. This year, the Committee will meet in Vienna for its fiftieth anniversary session. Today, the peaceful use of outer space includes the

entire range of issues covered by the world Organization’s activities.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty has become the keystone of the ever strengthening international legal basis. International cooperation on the peaceful use of outer space is for the benefit and in the interest of all States, regardless of their economic, social, scientific and technological development, and is the achievement of all humanity. Together, we must carry out much work to ensure that space is used exclusively for the progress of the human civilization.

Today, flights into space are no longer anything extraordinary. Over 50 years, more than 500 people from 38 countries have visited space. Even the term space tourism has emerged. As technology develops and becomes more accessible, the number of States actively participating in space activities will certainly increase.

Humanity’s space odyssey — the fruitful cooperation of many States in outer space — would have been impossible without the first step, that is, Yuri Gagarin’s flight. It is highly symbolic that recently, the Gagarin spacecraft carried a Russian-American crew to the International Space Station.

In the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Yuri Gagarin’s feat, the Russian Federation has prepared and submitted draft resolution A/65/L.67, whose objective is to declare 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight, to be celebrated internationally every year.

The draft resolution is short and its content is clear. Its provisions will not require any additional financial expenditure for the Organization. We are convinced that the adoption of the draft resolution will serve as an important contribution to strengthening cooperation on the peaceful use of outer space.

More than 60 countries have expressed interest in sponsoring the draft resolution. We are grateful to them all for their support. We call on the representatives of States present in the General Assembly Hall today to support Russia’s draft resolution.

We hope that from today, for all humanity 12 April will be celebrated as the International Day of Human Space Flight. The atmosphere of this Day will always be full of aspiration towards the future, as it was 50 years ago, when the first astronaut on Earth

launched a new era in the history of humanity — the space era — in his famous “We’re off”.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/65/L.67, entitled “International Day of Human Space Flight”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the publication of draft resolution A/65/L.67, the following countries have also become sponsors: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/65/L.67?

Draft resolution A/65/L.67 was adopted (resolution 65/271).

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Körösi (Hungary) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my particular pleasure to speak on behalf of the European Union at this very special plenary meeting of the General Assembly to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight.

(*spoke in English*)

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

(*spoke in Russian*)

As we have heard and seen today, and as we all know, the first human space flight, on 12 April 1961,

was not only an impressive technical achievement but a major milestone in human history. Major Yuri Gagarin, a cosmonaut and the commander of the spaceship *Vostok-1*, became a hero not only to his people but also to the whole of the international community. Following his flight, qualities such as bravery, modesty, confidence, professionalism, leadership and team spirit became forever associated with cosmonauts. Gagarin’s legacy will stay with us into the future. It is an honour that we have adopted today a resolution proclaiming the International Day of Human Space Flight.

(*spoke in English*)

Space makes an important contribution to the economies of the world and affects our daily lives in many ways for the common good of all mankind. It plays a vital role in the monitoring of our planet and the protection of the environment. Moreover, space exploration has brought technical advances to the material sciences, computing, engineering, communications, biomedicine and many other fields.

With the help of satellites, we are now able to see our home planet in detail. Space probes have made landings on distant planets, moons and asteroids, journeying to the very edge of our solar system. Orbiting astronomical telescopes have given scientists magnificent insights into the creation of life and of the whole universe.

Europe, in partnership with Russia, the United States, Japan and Canada, is sharing in the International Space Station project. Working through the European Space Agency, Europe is exclusively responsible for the European Columbus laboratory and the Automated Transfer Vehicle, the two key elements of the Station.

The European Union is fully committed to strengthening the security of activities in outer space in the context of expanding space activities that contribute to the development and security of States.

The growing number of actors and the rapid development of activities in outer space reinforce the long-standing position of the European Union and its member States in favour of the enhancement of the multilateral framework concerning the preservation of a peaceful, safe and secure environment in outer space.

To that end, the European Union is promoting the elaboration of an international, voluntary code of conduct for outer space activities — a tool that would

strengthen the safety, security and predictability of all space activities. Such a code should, among other things, limit or minimize harmful interference, collisions or accidents in outer space, as well as the creation of debris.

(spoke in Russian)

The prevention of an arms race in outer space and the need to prevent outer space from becoming an area of conflict are essential conditions for the strengthening of strategic stability. The European Union continues to promote international cooperation aimed at the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Today, with the adoption by the States Members of the United Nations of a resolution on an International Day of Human Space Flight, we bow our heads in memory of the heroes of the space era, first and foremost among them the first man who went into space and who opened the path for all of us.

Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I should like to welcome the convening of this special meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of human space flight.

On 12 April 1961, astronaut Yuri Gagarin of the former Soviet Union made the first space flight on *Vostok-1*, thus opening a new chapter in the human exploration of outer space. We see the need to commemorate this important day and reaffirm the contribution made by the first human space flight to the development of space science and technology.

We welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution designating 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight. That will help us to remember that historic moment, reaffirm the commitment to the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and ensure that those technologies serve the interests of humankind as a whole. We also thank the Russian delegation for having put forward this initiative.

Over the past 50 years, thanks to the efforts of scientists from all countries, great progress has been made in human space flight. Although the process has not been a smooth and easy one, human exploration of

outer space has never stopped. To date, nearly 40 countries have sent astronauts into space.

We are very pleased that China is making a contribution in that respect. Since 1999, China's human flight project has successfully completed seven flights, sent six astronauts into space three times and carried out a space walk. This year China will carry out the first rendezvous and docking flight and has begun to build a space station.

With the utmost confidence and courage, China will explore the unknown and make determined advances, thereby promoting, and making our contribution to, the cause of human space flight.

We should like to reiterate that we will always abide by the basic principles set out in the Outer Space Treaty and conduct all exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of humankind as a whole. We are ready to strengthen our cooperation with the international community in the exploration and use of outer space and in making advances in space science and technology for the benefit of all countries, in particular the developing countries. We hope that the international community will work together to promote harmony in the use of outer space, which is good for peace, development, cooperation and the rule of law.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on its fiftieth anniversary. We appreciate the leading role played by the Committee in the promotion of the peaceful use of outer space, the improvement of outer space legislation and the deepening of international cooperation. China will continue to promote the cause of the peaceful use of outer space together with all other countries.

Mrs. Pessoa (Brazil): We are gathered here today to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight. In a letter to Galileo Galilei, written in 1609, Johannes Kepler observed that

“Ships and sails proper for the heavenly air should be fashioned. Then there will also be people who do not shrink from the dreary vastness of space”.

We salute the pioneers who inaugurated the promising era of the exploration and use of outer space, the province of all mankind, for peaceful purposes.

On that distant day of 12 April 1961, when Yuri Gagarin was launched into outer space and orbited the Earth on board the *Vostok-1* spacecraft, one hardly could have anticipated the benefits that space technology would provide to life on our shared planet.

Today, space technology is an integral part of the everyday life of citizens around the globe. It has greatly contributed to resolving some of the most pressing issues through its applications for forecasting the weather, preventing natural disasters, protecting the environment, providing humanitarian assistance, controlling pandemics, imparting long-distance education and supporting sustainable development. It generates products and services for communications, imaging and navigation, which are essential for the functioning of several spheres of activity in our contemporary world.

Brazil is pleased to have sponsored resolution 65/271, which declares 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight. As a developing country, we are convinced of the need to invest in our own space programme for peaceful uses and in benefit of our sustainable development. We rely on the cooperation of international partners, but we also do our part in partnering with other developing countries to promote the peaceful uses of space technology in several areas of societal benefit.

We are firmly convinced of the need to use outer space for peaceful purposes and to ensure, through international cooperation, including South-South cooperation, that all nations have access to the products of space applications for their development and the enhanced well-being of their people.

We are sure that the General Assembly's adoption of today's resolution will promote awareness of the importance of space technology so that the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes can be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries.

Mr. Ragolini (Italy): In taking the floor, Italy endorses the statement made by the representative of Hungary on behalf of the European Union and wishes to add some comments in its national capacity.

Fifty years ago, on 12 April 1961, Flight Major Yuri Gagarin entered the *Vostok-1* space capsule and the annals of human history when his ship was launched into orbit around the Earth. I can still

remember that moment — although I was, happily, much younger than I am now — and how it felt to know that humankind had breached the final frontier, inaugurating a new era in science and exploration. Gagarin's name was on everyone's lips. He was a hero who inspired people around the world with his skill, his demeanour and his bravery.

Gagarin's achievement also brought within human grasp, into tangible reality, a world that had long been celebrated in the masterpieces of imagination. In Italy, the celestial spheres were envisioned by our first poets, and the greatest of them, Dante Alighieri, dedicated his magnum opus, *The Divine Comedy*, to the heavens. The first book, the *Inferno*, concludes with the famous indelible image of the two pilgrims emerging from the underworld to contemplate the sky above:

“We climbed up, he first and I behind him, far enough to see, through a round opening, a few of those fair things the heavens bear. Then we came forth, to see again the stars.” (*Inferno*, *Canto XXXIV*)

Another great Italian, Galileo Galilei, turned his telescope towards the stars some three centuries later and made discoveries that forever altered our view of the universe. When he published his findings in the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, he chose to do so not in Latin, the scientific language of the day, but in a modern language, Italian.

In the modern era, Italy's space adventure began in the 1960s. After Russia and the United States, we were the third country to launch its own satellite, the San Marco 1, on 15 December 1964.

That heritage makes me all the more proud that one of the astronauts speaking to us from the International Space Station today is Paolo Nespoli, an Italian national. He will soon be joined by another Italian, Roberto Vittori, marking the first time that Italy will have two astronauts working together on the International Space Station.

Nespoli and Vittori join an illustrious list of predecessors to cap off a series of Italy's contributions to the human exploration of space. As one of the first countries engaged in space exploration, Italy became a founder and key partner in the European Launcher Development Organization and the European Space Research Organization, both established in 1962.

Those organizations would later merge to form the European Space Agency, in 1975.

More recently, in February 2010, a special module called the Cupola, designed and built entirely in Italy, was brought on board the International Space Station. The Cupola provides seven large windows through which to observe the Earth and the universe.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight what has become perhaps the most significant aspect of human space exploration. Where once there was a race to space, now there is cooperation among countries, best exemplified by the International Space Station itself. The Station represents an international partnership comprised of Europe, Russia, the United States, Japan and Canada, with each country lending its own resources and expertise to that common project.

There could thus be no forum more appropriate in which to celebrate human space flight than here, at the United Nations, where we join together as one family in celebrating the achievements of humankind over the past 50 years. That is why we praise and support the initiative of the Russian Federation to declare 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I am honoured to deliver my statement to the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight.

The exploration of and human ventures into outer space are an integral part of my country's history. It is a history that enables Kazakhstan to claim its rightful position as an international launching pad and space harbour. It was from the Baikonur launch pad, aboard the *Vostok-1* spacecraft, that Yuri Gagarin ushered in the era of space flight on 12 April 1961.

Kazakhstan is of course a sponsor of resolution 65/271, whose adoption we welcome. Clearly, a great many journeys to other planets and galaxies will be made in the future, but Yuri Gagarin's accomplishment will always be warmly remembered as magnificent, timeless, historic and legendary. With his 108-minute flight into space, he exemplified not only the triumph of science, engineering and technology, but also the irrepressibility of human endeavour and its infinite possibilities.

Baikonur is the world's first and largest operational space launch facility. Like Cape Canaveral in the United States and the Jiuquan Satellite Launch

Centre in China, Baikonur is fully equipped to launch various types of rockets, including manned and unmanned spacecraft. Baikonur celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on 2 June 2005. Over the past 50 years, more than 1,500 spacecraft of various types were launched into space, including 38 types of rockets and more than 80 categories of spacecraft.

The President returned to the Chair.

The word Baikonur in Kazakh means fruitful land. The people of Kazakhstan saw the cosmonauts take off from there with great anticipation and excitement. We were always overjoyed when space crews returned to Earth after their long and courageous efforts in outer space. We were proud that it was on Kazakh soil that cosmonauts again felt the gravity of their home planet, saw the blue sky overhead and received our warm and friendly embrace. I know that these sentiments are shared by cosmonauts from 23 Member States. Kazakhstan can truly be proud of its two cosmonauts, Toktar Aubakirov and Talgat Musabayev, who are members of the international group of space travellers.

Baikonur opened a great many chapters in the history of astronautics. One of the highlights of these innovations was the dawn of the era of space tourism, when on 28 April 2001 an international crew was launched from Baikonur, including the first space tourist, the American Dennis Tito.

Kazakhstan attaches great significance to developing its own space activities as an important and sustainable source of innovative technologies and progress. For us, this is an issue of international competitiveness that will give powerful impetus to national industrial development. The creation of a full-fledged space industry is one of the priority areas of our national policy directly supported by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Kazakhstan is implementing its national programme for space development on the basis of broad international cooperation with Russian, European, American and several other partners. Since our independence, we have developed the necessary legal framework for cooperation and undertaken joint projects with the Russian Federation, France and other leading countries.

Kazakhstan has formulated its space development policy in accordance with the relevant international

conventions, agreements, obligations and United Nations resolutions. We champion the peaceful use of outer space.

Kazakhstan is ready to continue to work within the framework of multilateral efforts to fulfil the objectives of the United Nations in the field of the peaceful use of outer space in the twenty-first century to guarantee the collective security of all of humankind.

Mrs. Hernández Toledano (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The dawn of space exploration was one of humankind's greatest achievements in the past century. When, 50 years ago in 1961, the Soviet Union launched the first human space flight, it heralded a new era of exploration, research and international cooperation in the use of outer space. Cuba therefore commends the timely initiative of the Russian Federation to hold this meeting of the General Assembly and the proposal to celebrate 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight.

For Cuba, this meeting and the resolution we have just adopted (resolution 65/271) are particularly meaningful. Only three months after his historic flight into space, Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin visited Cuba. He won the hearts of our people, who welcomed him like a son. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans turned out to see him receive the Order of Playa Girón in the Plaza de la Revolución.

During his time in our country, Gagarin stated that the day would come when Cuba could send its own cosmonauts into space. His prediction came true. To the great pride of the Cuban people, history was made in 1980 when Arnaldo Tamayo became the first cosmonaut from Cuba, and the first from Latin America and the Caribbean, to travel to space. During that voyage, more than 20 research experiments prepared by Cuban and Soviet scientists were carried out, which later had important practical applications.

Cuba firmly believes that the peaceful exploration of outer space will contribute to the preservation of the human race. That is why we firmly reject the development of an arms race in space. It is unacceptable that certain countries continue to spend astronomical sums on war plans, including in outer space. If this continues, not only will the promising future of space applications be destroyed, but their very existence will be threatened.

Space belongs to humankind as a whole and should only be put to such noble uses as the pursuit of sustainable development and the prevention of natural disasters. The right of all States to explore and use outer space for the benefit of humankind is a universally accepted principle. This is why, even though the number of States participating in space activities is growing, there is an urgent need for greater bilateral and multilateral cooperation, in particular through the sharing of experience and technology, especially with developing countries.

The role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should be strengthened. Moreover, relations between the Committee and the Commission on Sustainable Development should be promoted with a view to ensuring that space technologies are applied for the good of development.

Gazing down at our planet from space during his 108-minute flight in the *Vostok-1* spacecraft on 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin exclaimed "People of the world, let us safeguard and enhance this beauty — not destroy it!" On the fiftieth anniversary of the first human space flight, we could pay no greater tribute than to commit together to realize that wish of the first cosmonaut.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary meeting of the General Assembly to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human flight to outer space. I also thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for the initiative that led to this event.

We are gathered here today to celebrate not just a single event — the launch of a spaceship and its pilot, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin — we are here to celebrate what his flight stood for, namely, exploration, adventure, scientific discovery and development. The flight was a huge milestone in the history of humankind. By turning a dream cherished by generation after generation of leaders, scientists, writers and ordinary people around the planet into reality, the flight heralded a new age of activities in space exploration, contributing immensely to man's ability to improve the quality of life on Earth.

In addition to the tremendous successes recorded in subsequent human space flights and robotic discoveries across the solar system, human beings now have unprecedented insights into Mother Earth's systems from orbiting satellites. That also includes

incredible advances in biological and physical research. Increased international cooperation in space science has also helped diminish the mystery of the unknown universe and bring down the frontiers of space in the interests of all.

Conscious of the role that space science plays in development, Viet Nam attaches great importance to research in this field. As early as 1979, the Government of Viet Nam set up a commission on space research to prepare for the joint Soviet-Viet Nam human space flight. As a result, the first Vietnamese cosmonaut, hero and pilot Pham Tuan, successfully undertook his joint mission with Russian cosmonaut Viktor Gorbatko in such a flight aboard Soyuz-37, which lasted 7 days, 20 hours and 42 minutes, from 23 to 31 July 1980. The flight enabled the Vietnamese cosmonaut to conduct experiments on melting mineral samples in microgravity, carry out experiments on plants and perform aerial photographing of Viet Nam for mapping purposes.

For the exploration of outer space to serve the interests and benefit of all humankind and for international cooperation in this field to be fruitful, the international community must also strengthen efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space. While supporting and contributing to the exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes, Viet Nam supports the consideration of further measures in the search for agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space, including the weaponization of outer space, in accordance with the spirit of resolutions 65/68 and 65/97, as well as other previous Assembly resolutions. We support the conclusion by the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty to this effect.

In line with this fundamental policy on space activities, in 2006 the Government of Viet Nam adopted its strategy on research and application of space technology by 2020, which states that all activities in the research and use of outer space must be aimed at peaceful purposes, contribute to the prevention of a possible arms race in outer space and strengthen international cooperation in formulating a legal framework for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful ends.

It is also in line with this fundamental policy on space activities that Viet Nam was a sponsor of resolution 65/271, presented by the Russian Federation, as we are convinced that it will further

promote the effective peaceful use of outer space for the benefit of all humankind.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): On 12 April 2011, the world will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the first human flight into space. Our delegation appreciates the initiative of the delegation of the Russian Federation to hold this special plenary meeting to introduce the draft resolution declaring 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight (resolution 65/271) in honour of Yuri Gagarin's space flight. We are happy to have been a sponsor of the resolution. I also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, and members of the General Assembly on this historic occasion.

I would like to mention that India is celebrating the twenty-seventh anniversary of space flight by an Indian. Rakesh Sharma was the first Indian to go into space, aboard the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' Soyuz-T11 from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on 3 April 1984.

India's own *Chandrayaan-1*, with many international payloads, including one from the United States, was instrumental in conclusively establishing the presence of water and hydroxyl molecules on the lunar surface. India performed a unique joint experiment known as a bistatic experiment, involving *Chandrayaan-1* and NASA's lunar reconnaissance orbiter spacecraft, on 21 August 2009, in order to obtain additional information on the possibility of the existence of ice in a permanently shadowed crater near the north pole of the Moon. Additionally, the analysis of data obtained by the miniature synthetic aperture radar on-board the *Chandrayaan-1* spacecraft has provided evidence for the presence of ice deposits near the Moon's north pole.

Chandrayaan-2, India's second mission to the Moon, will be launched on India's geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle some time in the 2012–2013 time frame. It will have an orbiter and land a rover module. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will have the primary responsibility for the orbiter and the rover. The Russian Federal Space Agency will be responsible for the lander. The goals of the mission are to further improve the understanding of the origin and evolution of the Moon, using instruments on board the orbiter and in situ analysis of lunar samples using the lander and rover.

ISRO is carrying out studies on undertaking human space flight to carry human beings to low-Earth orbit and ensure their safe return. It has initiated pre-project activities to study technical and managerial issues relating to undertaking a human mission, with an aim to build and demonstrate our capability. The programme envisages the development of a fully autonomous orbital vehicle carrying two or three crew members to about 300 kilometres in low-Earth orbit, including their safe return.

The emphasis of the Indian space programme has always been on integrating the advances in space technology and applications with national development goals, particularly in vital service areas such as telecommunications, television broadcasting, meteorology, disaster warning and natural resource surveying and management. We place considerable importance on international cooperation in space activities, mainly in taking up new scientific and technological challenges and defining international frameworks for the exploitation and utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes.

India continues to provide expertise on services for supporting developing countries in the application of space technology through capacity-building. The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, which is affiliated with the United Nations and operates from India, has so far benefited 894 scholars from 31 countries of the Asia-Pacific region and 28 scholars from 17 countries outside that region. India would like to request more participation from member countries.

Under the Severe Thunderstorm Observations and Regional Modelling Programme of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, India is providing a Doppler weather radar to its member countries. India is also committed to sharing the data obtained from its Indian Remote Sensing satellites within the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for disaster management support. We recently made an arrangement with Brazil to provide RESOURCESAT-1 data.

The myriad beneficial developments that have flowed from space research and exploration have been enumerated by many of those who have spoken before me. The first spaceflight by Yuri Gagarin was a pioneering human achievement in the exploration of outer space. India considers the declaration of 12 April

as the International Day of Human Space Flight in honour of Yuri Gagarin as a tribute to human efforts in space exploration and the harnessing of the potential of space for the benefit of humankind. India supports resolution 65/271.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): Humanity's journey beyond Earth famously began as the space race — a high-stakes struggle for security and prestige between two competitors, the United States and the Soviet Union. Today, the space race is over and, thanks to the remarkably improved atmosphere of cooperation, we have all won.

Space exploration is no longer a competition. It is a vital aspect of modern science and an endeavour requiring close cooperation between international partners in pursuit of our scientific and technological goals. The United States and Russia's work together on space science and exploration has long been, and continues to be, a model of productive partnership between nations. Earlier this week, Russia's Soyuz mission was the latest to carry both Russian and American nationals to the International Space Station. Next week, the chiefs of our space agencies, NASA and the Russian Federal Space Agency, will meet in Moscow to discuss future projects and missions that will push the frontiers of human knowledge of space farther than ever before.

The accomplishments of space exploration stretch beyond learning about our planet and universe and have provided the technological basis for innovations in computer technology, medicine, renewable energy and countless other fields. What is more, human space flight has turned into one of the world's truly international undertakings, with citizens from more than 30 different countries — from Afghanistan to Viet Nam — travelling beyond Earth's atmosphere. In the coming years, those intrepid explorers will be joined by citizens from other nations.

The fiftieth anniversary of human space flight is a proper occasion to reflect upon humanity's achievements in space and to renew our commitment to realizing our common aspirations. Through cooperative space exploration, all nations that operate in space find their horizons broadened, their knowledge enhanced and the lives of their citizens improved. As President Kennedy said in 1962,

“We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be

won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people.”

Those words ring just as true today. For all these reasons, the United States is honoured to have been a sponsor of the resolution we have just adopted, and to join in the commemoration of this historic milestone.

Mrs. Kolontai (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus, including as a former Soviet republic, enjoys a long history of participation in space exploration programmes. Soviet cosmonauts participating in the exploration of outer space included natives of Belarus, Petr Klimuk and Vladimir Kovalenok. In 1978, two Belarusian cosmonauts were in orbit simultaneously. The Republic of Belarus participated in many space programmes of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, starting in the early 1960s. That served as an important stimulus for the development of the scientific and industrial complex of Belarus in the field of space technologies.

Currently, Belarus is actively implementing its national space programme for the period 2008 to 2012, whose goal is the effective use of the space sector's accumulated scientific and technological potential for the social and economic development and individual industrial sectors of Belarus, including for the benefit of our citizens and the purposes of science education.

The Republic of Belarus fully supported and joined as a sponsor the resolution initiated by the Russian Federation proclaiming 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight, which underscores the historic importance of space flight in the development of humankind (resolution 65/271). As the great Russian scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, who was one of the founders of today's space activities, said, “Earth is the cradle of mankind; but one cannot live one's whole life in a cradle”. The importance of Yuri Gagarin's flight as man's first step into outer space is clear, just as is the need to continue to integrate international scientific space achievements.

The delegation of Belarus fully associates itself with the provisions of the resolution we have adopted. The resolution attaches great importance to international cooperation for the peaceful use of outer space, in which the United Nations must play an important role.

In conclusion, allow me to express our conviction that the Assembly's adoption of this resolution and the

proclamation of 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight will not only underscore the universal importance of this event, but will also serve as the United Nations contribution to strengthening international cooperation for the peaceful use of outer space.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): I would like to thank the delegation of the Russian Federation and the other sponsors of resolution 65/271, which we have just adopted and which signifies the importance of space science and technology for achieving sustainable development goals and increasing the well-being of societies. The diverse sponsorship of the resolution reflects the willingness of many Member States from different regions to further promote and expand the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Fifty years ago, Yuri Gagarin's words “Let's go!” at the beginning of the first manned flight into space marked a new page in world history and opened the way for space exploration for the benefit of all humankind.

A decisive role in realizing the flight was played by academician Sergei Korolev and the Council of Chief Designers created under his leadership, a body that was unprecedented in the history of science. Putting together the talents and skills of many outstanding scientists, engineers and researchers, the Council made it possible to put a man in space.

It is with honour that we note that the esteemed ranks of the Council included Armenia's own Andronik Iosifyan, who served as the chief designer of the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Electromechanics. Under his leadership, the Institute became responsible for solving the diverse electrical engineering problems that arise in rocket and space technologies.

In addition to the numerous members of the Armenian scientific community who have played a prominent role in developing space technology, such as Grigor Gurzadyan, who is considered to be the founder of radio astronomy, there were others who were directly involved in the work leading to Gagarin's flight, including Ruben Chachikyan, the chief designer in charge of pressurization elements within the landing system, and Armen Mnatsakanyan, one of the chief designers for the space radio system, who at that time

headed the Scientific Research Institute of Precision Instruments.

I am proud to say that today Armenia continues to be actively involved in this difficult knowledge-intensive field that is so vital for the development of economies, even if it is constrained to some degree by the difficulties that our country continues to face.

The outstanding work of the Yerevan Physics Institute's cosmic ray division in the area of space weather, which is endorsed by the United Nations and undertaken in collaboration with a number of the sponsors of today's resolution, and that of the Institute's Electric Sky Project, which is at the forefront of the research on the not yet well understood but powerful and important electrical phenomena in the upper atmosphere, are just a couple of examples of the research currently being done in Armenia.

We note with satisfaction that as a result of international cooperation progress has been achieved in furthering the goals of space science and technology education. In that context, Armenian scientists currently cooperate with a number of space-related organizations in connection with their research, including NASA, the European Space Agency, the Russian Federal Space Agency, the Committee on Space Research and others. The success of our common goals in this respect depends heavily on global cooperation. We hope that this resolution once again reaffirms the importance of that fact.

Today, we fully recognize the usefulness and significance of that international endeavour. Our scientific community is ready to continue its international and regional cooperation programmes with a view to achieving a convergence of positions on many issues of common concern in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Let me conclude simply by saying that Armenia remains entirely supportive of the increasingly important role of the United Nations in ensuring that outer space is maintained for peaceful uses and exploration and that the achievements of space science and technology are applied for the benefit of all peoples.

Ms. Ochir (Mongolia): Space science and technology touch many aspects of our daily lives and make a significant contribution to the advancement of human development. It is therefore difficult to

overestimate the historic importance of the first human space flight, on 12 April 1961, undertaken by Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

The first human flight in outer space was indeed a milestone in human history, paving the way for space exploration for the benefit of all humankind. It was an event that captivated, and will never cease to captivate, the minds of people all over the world. For those who made that flight possible, it was also the result of their genius and many years of arduous work. On behalf of my Government, I would like to congratulate the Russian Federation and its people on the fiftieth anniversary of that historic achievement.

The first human space flight established a great legacy not only of space exploration, but also of international cooperation in that area, which has benefited many countries, including Mongolia. A vivid example is the Soviet Intercosmos programme for international cooperation in space exploration, which enabled a joint Mongolian-Soviet space flight to take place on 22 March 1981, with the first Mongolian cosmonaut on board. During their seven-day flight, the joint Mongolian-Soviet crew successfully performed a total of more than 30 scientific experiments and studies in the fields of space physics, technology, medical biology, remote sensing and other areas. The joint crew thoroughly photographed and surveyed Mongolia's territory from space, which provided invaluable insights into its geography, natural resource reserves, geology, agricultural land, surface waters and climatic conditions.

Thanks to the Intercosmos programme and the outstanding Soviet cosmonauts who supported our cosmonaut during the flight, Mongolia became the tenth country out of the more than 30 countries that so far have travelled into space, as well as the twentieth country to have carried out scientific experiments in space. That example vividly demonstrates how far-reaching the legacy of Gagarin's space flight was by making it possible for small developing countries such as Mongolia to benefit directly from space exploration.

Mongolia is proud to have been a sponsor of resolution 65/271, which declares 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight.

Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova): At the outset, I would like to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for having convened this plenary meeting to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Yuri

Gagarin's flight to outer space. Commemorating the first human flight to space once again acknowledges the relevance of that most remarkable event of modern history to the future development and progress of humankind.

Along with the launching of the first man-made satellite, the first manned space flight opened new horizons and frontiers for human endeavours and established the beginning of space research and exploration, revealing unprecedented prospects for the world. Undoubtedly, the half century that followed became an era of space science and the peaceful uses of outer space for the well-being of humankind.

The increased number of States capable of launching satellites, the work of international crews in outer space, and common interest in promoting and expanding its exploration and use for peaceful purposes have become a reality and form an integral part of international cooperation and of everyday life. The benefits derived from space applications have transformed the way people look at their environment and planet, influenced their communication and interaction and changed the way people move from one place to another, greatly increasing its safety, security, accuracy, predictability and convenience.

Equally, the development of space science and the practical applications of its achievements through the production and implementation of innovative technologies in various fields was an important prerequisite for the advancement of economies and sustainable development.

Over the past five decades, the United Nations has played, and continues to play, an important role not only in the exploration and peaceful use of outer space, but also in ensuring that the benefits of space activities are shared by all nations. As the standing body concerned exclusively with such tasks, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two subcommittees have been successful in fostering international cooperation in space activities, especially

in meeting new scientific and technological challenges and in defining an international framework for the exploitation and peaceful use of outer space.

It remains the central focal point for United Nations Member States to seek avenues for further enhanced partnerships in advancing research and space science, devising programmes and United Nations technical cooperation and integrating advances in space technologies and applications into development goals.

The United Nations should further strengthen its role in shaping international standards for space activities and in promoting cooperation and coordination at the global, regional and interregional levels. The increased international cooperation and contribution of all countries participating in the peaceful uses of outer space development activities can maximize the benefits of space capabilities in the service of humanity and create a positive change with regard to climate change, desertification, biodiversity loss, the energy crisis and artificial and natural disasters.

Space exploration and its peaceful uses are a great achievement of mankind, and the international community should develop new forms of collaboration for the benefit and prosperity of all States. We believe that the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary and the declaration of 12 April as the International Day of Human Space Flight will give new impetus to international cooperation in outer space activities. We hope that today's resolution 65/271 will make a solid contribution to sustainable space exploration in the service of all humanity.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker on this item. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 50?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.