

## UN/COPUOS

### Outer Space: Recommendations

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) held its forty-fourth session in Vienna from 6 to 15 June 2001, under the chairmanship of Raimundo Gonzales (Chile).

Items on the agenda included ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes; implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III); and the report of the Legal Subcommittee on the fortieth session.

In his opening speech, the Chairman outlined the work of the Committee at its current session in which he stressed that in order to assist in the process of globalisation it was necessary to take measures favouring the globalisation of solidarity.

Statements were made by many delegations during the general exchange of views. Some reiterated their concern about the intentional re-entry of space debris in the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Those delegations expressed the view that such re-entry constituted a serious threat to States and threatened the marine environment and its natural resources.

Another view expressed was that, because of the growing number of cases in which parts of space objects had been found on the ground, the Office for Outer Space Affairs should provide information for advanced alert and localisation of decaying space debris that could cause damage on the ground.

Some delegations stated that mankind was facing serious challenges in the peaceful uses of outer space. They expressed the view that the utilisation of outer space for military purposes had been rising alarmingly and the trend towards the "weaponisation" of outer space had been increasing, and that COPUOS should make greater efforts to prevent further militarisation of outer space. It should take immediate action to step up work in formulating legal regulations on the matter.

After considering the various items before it, the Committee adopted its report to the General Assembly, which

contained the recommendations and decisions summarised below:

#### Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes

The Committee agreed that it had responsibilities relating to strengthening the international basis for the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space, which could cover, among other things, the further development of international space law, including, as appropriate, the preparation of international agreements governing various practical peaceful applications of space science and technology.

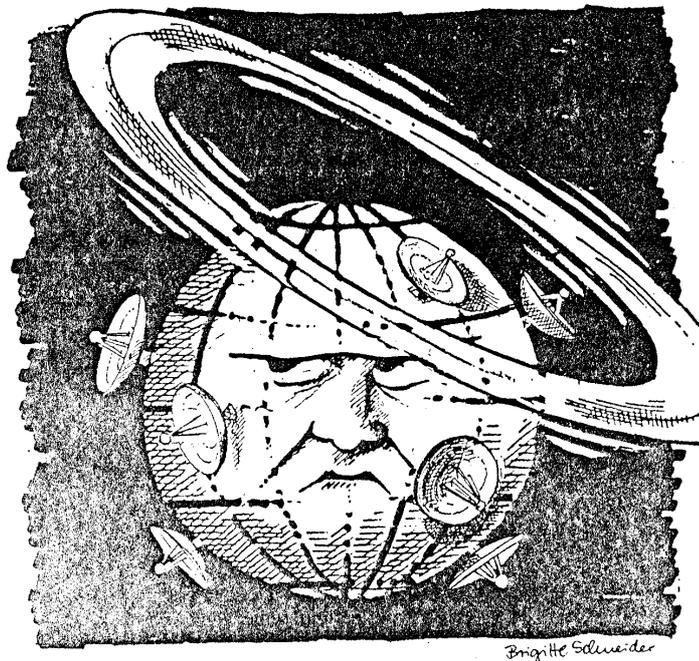
COPUOS acknowledged that it also had an important role to play in promoting acceptance of the existing United Nations treaties on outer space.

The Committee also agreed that beneficial uses of space such as strengthening communications infrastructure, disaster management, education, agriculture, environmental protection and natural resource management had enormous relevance for human development, particularly in developing countries. It underlined that the wider adoption of such beneficial applications

would strengthen the goal of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

The view was expressed that the Committee had been created exclusively to promote international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. Therefore, the disarmament aspects of outer space were more appropriately dealt with in other fora, such as the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament.

Some delegations stated that COPUOS was a competent organ to consider all issues affecting the peaceful uses of outer space – including any militarisation of outer space, which was contrary to international law, such as the Charter of the United Nations and the *Treaty on Principles*



*Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies* (the "Outer Space Treaty", General Assembly resolution 2222 (XXI), annex) of 1967. Those delegations expressed the view that consideration on preventing an arms race in outer space by the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament should not prevent COPUOS from also considering related issues.

One delegation expressed the view that the most direct and effective way of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes would be the conclusion of one or more international agreements prohibiting the testing, deployment and use of any weapons, weapon systems or their components in outer space; the testing, deployment and use on the ground, in the sea and in the atmosphere of any weapons, weapon systems or components aimed at outer space warfare; and the use of any object launched into outer space for the purpose of warfare. That delegation stated that consideration in COPUOS of the item entitled "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes" could naturally include the establishment of a legal regime to maintain outer space for peaceful purposes.

The Committee recommended that, at its forty-fifth session in 2002, it should continue its consideration, on a priority basis, of the item on ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

### **Implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III**

The Committee noted that the General Assembly had urged all Governments, organs, organisations and programmes of the United Nations system as well as inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations and industries conducting space-related activities to take the necessary action for the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), in particular its resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development." (See *Environmental Policy and Law*, Vol. 30 (2000) Nos. 1, 2 at page 69.)

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/122, the Committee noted that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had convened the Working Group of the Whole, to consider the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III.

It noted that the Working Group of the Whole had made recommendations on the following:

- a mechanism to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III and modalities for the engagement of non-governmental entities; and
- the implementation of the plan of action of the Office of Outer Space Affairs to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Working Group of the Whole concerning the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, as contained in its report (A/AC.105/761, annex II, paras. 3-14).

### *Establishment of action teams*

Pursuant to a recommendation by the Working Group of the Whole, a survey had been conducted among Member States to identify the level of interest and priority for each action constituting the nucleus of a strategy contained in the Vienna Declaration to address global challenges in the future. The Committee had before it papers containing the results of the survey.

Some delegations expressed the view that, prior to identifying leaders and establishing action teams, a number of criteria should be drawn up by the Committee.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the comprehensive response to the survey that had been received from many Member States. It agreed that the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III could proceed in stages. In the first stage, the Committee would seek to implement recommendations that fell into the following two groups:

- a) Group 1: Those recommendations which were considered by Member States to be of highest priority as indicated by the results of the survey;
- b) Group 2: Those recommendations for which there were States that had offered to be coordinators of action teams to implement recommendations.

The Committee recognised that two types of action were recommended in the Vienna Declaration:

- a) actions that Member States had a direct interest in pursuing through their national activities; and
- b) actions that were related to strengthening the work of the Committee and of the United Nations, as well as coordination with other organisations of the United Nations system that could be undertaken under the leadership of the Office for Outer Space Affairs.

For each recommendation to be addressed by the Committee through action teams there would be an assessment phase and an implementation phase.

### *Recommendations assigned the highest priority\**

The Committee identified the following recommendations as those, which had been assigned the highest priority by Member States:

1. Develop a comprehensive worldwide environmental monitoring strategy.
2. Improve the management of Earth's natural resources.
7. Implement an integrated, global system to manage natural disaster mitigation, relief and prevention efforts.
10. Improve universal access to and compatibility of space-based navigation and positioning systems.
11. Promote sustainable development by applying the results of space research.
18. Increase awareness among decision makers and the general public of the importance of space activities.

\* (Each recommendation is numbered as in the questionnaire circulated to Member States in a note dated 13 March 2001. The questionnaire listed the recommendations in the order of their appearance in the Vienna Declaration.)

(MJ)

