

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF  
THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE  
to the  
Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)  
of the General Assembly at its Sixty-ninth Session

Agenda item 49: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

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Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honour for me to address the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) in my capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) for the period 2014-2015.

Together with my colleagues in the bureau of the Committee, Mr. Diego Stacey Moreno of Ecuador as First Vice-Chair of the Committee, and Mr. Samir Mohammed Raouf of Iraq and Mr. Ma Xinmin of China as Second Vice-Chair/Rapporteur of the Committee for 2014 and 2015 respectively, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Yasushi Horikawa of Japan, who skilfully guided the work of the Committee for the past two years together with his bureau members for that period, Mr. Filipe Duarte Santos of Portugal and Mr. Piotr Wolanski of Poland.

I have the pleasure of welcoming Ms. Simonetta Di Pippo as the new Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs. The Office has a unique standing in the United Nations system with its broad mandate and comprehensive competence ranging from science and technology to law and policy.

Let me take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to the Office for Outer Space Affairs as Secretariat of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies for its outstanding support to our common endeavours. I am pleased to note the activities undertaken by the Office in its capacity as the Executive Secretariat to the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG). The United Nations Programme on Space Applications and UN-SPIDER continue to play important roles in many areas critical to our work. I am also pleased to note the continuous commitment by the Office in capacity-building efforts in space law and policy. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, known as UN-Space, is the central coordination mechanism of space-related activities in the United Nations family, and is furthering its coordination efforts under the leadership of the Office.

I look forward to working closely with the Director of the Office and all her staff in promoting international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all humanity.

Distinguished Delegates,

The report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on its fifty-seventh session contained in document A/69/20, before you, gives a comprehensive overview of the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies during this year. In the Working Group of the Whole of the Fourth Committee, I will introduce the draft omnibus resolution covering the agreements of the Committee and its two Subcommittees.

At the very outset, and in view of the decisions by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/75 of 11 December 2013, I sincerely welcome Belarus and Ghana as the newest member States of the Committee, which now brings the membership to 76 States. I also welcome the Inter-Islamic Network on Space Sciences and Technology (ISNET) as the newest international organization with permanent observer status with the Committee.

The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee made considerable achievements earlier this year and through their work we are demonstrating the importance of making concrete progress in terms of the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and in enhancing the capacity of States to promote economic, social and cultural development with the use of space tools, and by enhancing the understanding of regulatory frameworks and mechanisms to that effect.

I would in particular like to congratulate Mr. Elod Both of Hungary and Mr. Kai-Uwe Schrogl of Germany on their skilful guidance of the work of the Subcommittees. Likewise, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. V. K. Dadhwaj of India, Mr. Sam Harbison of the United Kingdom, Mr. Peter Martinez of South Africa, Ms. Setsuko Aoki of Japan, Mr. Jean-Francois Mayence of Belgium and Mr. Jose Monserrat Filho of Brazil for their excellent leadership this year of the respective Working Groups of the Subcommittees.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Committee and its Subcommittees have for many decades made extraordinary achievements in advancing international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and are continuously serving as a unique platform at the global level in fostering such common efforts.

In 2011 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of human space flight, commemorating the first human space flight performed by Yuri Gagarin, and the 50th anniversary of the Committee, as manifested by the General Assembly in its 50th Anniversary Declaration adopted through resolution 66/71. In 2013 we celebrated another historic event, the 50th anniversary of the first space-flight performed by a woman, cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, and the tenth anniversary of the first human space flight by China. I would also like to recall that in 2012 we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Landsat programme and the worldwide evolution of remote sensing from space, which was timely considering the Rio+20 Conference held that year.

This year we recognize the 50th anniversary of European cooperation in space and the 45th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission for the first time placing humans on the surface of the Moon.

This month we celebrated World Space Week, which was declared by the General Assembly in 1999 to be observed annually between 4 and 10 October. Earlier this year we celebrated the International Day of Human Space Flight which was declared by the General Assembly in 2011 to be observed annually on 12 April.

Commemorations of this nature truly bring forward the importance of space exploration, science, technology applications and diplomacy.

Distinguished Delegates,

Through the Committee's agenda item on space and sustainable development and under the item of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee devoted to socioeconomic development in the context of the Rio+20 conference and the post-2015 development agenda, we are working towards a common approach to those global processes within the Committee as a whole. We note the need to increase awareness at the global level to fully recognize the importance of space tools and space-derived information to meet the objectives of the global development agenda.

The General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has completed its work on sustainable development goals and those results have been acknowledged by the General Assembly. The post-2015 development agenda is also taking shape. In this context, and building upon the contribution of the Committee to the Rio+20 conference articulated in its report A/AC.105/993 from 2011, the establishment and strengthening of sustainable and standards-driven spatial data infrastructures merit recognition as means of implementation of those development goals and objectives.

For more effective and strengthened implementation in line with the Millennium Declaration, the post-2015 development agenda will require advanced tools with transformative power. Such tools should not only have the highest transformative potential, but also be universally applicable to all areas of development in the post-2015 framework, be it health or food security, climate change or disaster risk reduction. Space technology provides the means that can transform traditional approaches in virtually any sector of economy. Space-derived data and information is used for monitoring the implementation of eventual mitigation measures, supporting analysis of the impact of such measures and establishing scientifically justified strategies for future actions.

Concerted efforts are required to ensure continuous monitoring and assessment of the environment in meeting sustainable development objectives at all levels. In this context it is therefore essential to look into means to:

1. Enhance autonomous national capabilities and build an enabling environment in the area of space-derived data and information, including the development of associated infrastructures and institutional arrangements;
2. Develop capacities in, and strengthen the institutional framework for using space science and technology and their applications for development; and
3. Enhance international cooperation in facilitating the discovery of, access to, processing and exchange of space-derived data and information for its multisectoral utilization in a harmonized manner for planning and decision-making processes.

The Committee, at its fifty-seventh session this year, encouraged member States of the Committee to liaise nationally with their respective authorities and departments responsible for the intergovernmental processes related to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the post-2015 development agenda in order to promote the inclusion in those processes of the relevance of space science and technology applications and the use of space-derived geospatial data.

In this connection, the Committee recognized the fundamental significance of space-derived information and data for global, regional, national and local management of sustainability, and stressed the need to recognize the contribution of space for the formulation of policies and programmes of action, as well as their subsequent implementation. The Committee emphasised the need to facilitate the creation of adequate patterns of representation and institutional integration of space-related capacities into international, regional, national and local sustainable development processes.

Distinguished Delegates,

Against this background, international cooperation at regional, inter-regional and global levels is essential. It is of importance that regional and inter-regional perspectives of international space cooperation involving conferences and mechanisms are being addressed in view of our common efforts to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

I would like to underline the particular role of regional mechanisms in providing platforms for enhanced coordination and cooperation between space faring nations and emerging space nations and in establishing partnerships between users and providers of space-based services.

I recognize in this regard the activities and programmes of the European Space Agency (ESA) and the more recent coordination mechanisms of the African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development (ALC); the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF); the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO); and the Space Conference of the Americas.

As an example I would like to refer to the African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development (ALC), particularly its third Conference (ALC-3) held in Algiers in 2009 which highlighted the importance of establishing a framework for regional cooperation to promote adequate resources within African countries to respond to the African needs of space tools such as the African Resource Management Constellation (ARMC) project.

This African concern was consolidated by the Mombasa Declaration adopted at the fourth Conference (ALC-4) held in Kenya in 2011, which recognizes the essential contribution of space science and technology to the well-being of humanity and to the economic, social and cultural development of Africa in particular; considers that space transcends boundaries and local interests permitting the development of comprehensive solutions to address common challenges faced by all African countries; and recognizes that orderly conduct of space activities is beneficial to all countries, and that compliance by States and international organizations of the treaty provisions relating to space should be encouraged.

Distinguished Delegates,

The role of other international organizations and entities in the space field continues to be of major importance to our common endeavour to promote space activities at the national, regional, interregional and global levels.

I would like to recall the successful holding earlier this month of the International Astronautical Congress (IAC), organized annually by the International Astronautical Federation (IAF), this year together with the Government of Canada and held in Toronto.

I would also like to highlight the important role that the Regional Centres for Space Science and Technology Education, affiliated to the United Nations, play in enhancing cooperative efforts. The Regional Centres have firmly established infrastructures for advanced training in the field of space science and technology, and their long-standing education programmes are highly successful, including building upon the scientific curricula developed through the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the latest on GNSS and on space law.

Likewise, the network of UN-SPIDER Regional Support Offices around the World caters for regional coordination efforts in the area of disaster risk reduction.

Distinguished Delegates,

In terms of governance, the overall mandate of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies aims at strengthening the international legal regime governing the use of outer space, resulting in improved conditions for expanding international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. In this connection, the Committee has been instrumental in the development of five United Nations treaties on outer space, with the Outer Space Treaty establishing the fundamental principles of international space law, and five sets of legal principles and declarations on outer space activities.

In more recent times the Committee and its subsidiary bodies have made considerable achievements resulting in General Assembly resolution 59/115 from 2004 on the “application of the concept of the launching State”, resolution 62/101 from 2007 on “recommendations on enhancing the practice of States and international organizations in registering space objects”, the 2007 Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and the 2009 Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space.

In 2013 the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/74, entitled “Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space”. Through its resolution 68/75, the General Assembly welcomed the recommendations for an international response to the near-Earth object impact threat. The coordination mechanisms under this framework are being established through two mechanisms, the international asteroid warning network (IAWN) and the space mission planning advisory group (SMPAG).

Moreover, and in line with General Assembly resolution 68/50 from last year on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, the Committee agreed on the importance of considering the broader perspective of space security and associated matters that would be instrumental in ensuring the safe and responsible conduct of space activities. The Committee decided to consider at its next session in 2015 the

recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189) as they relate to safety of space operations and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

Distinguished Delegates,

Disasters continuously strike societies in all parts of the World and demonstrate over and over again how vulnerable we are against the forces of nature and how important it is to build capacities to mitigate the devastating effects of disasters and develop policies and practices for long-term decision-making at all levels. In the context of global health we see societies being haunted by infectious diseases to the detriment of human life, society and development. Those are two examples of major global concern where space-derived data and applications play an essential role in providing information for monitoring, preparedness, and response.

The Committee has continuously made efforts to promote and increase awareness and capacity-building in the use of space technology applications, at the global, interregional, regional, and national level, in many critical areas of concern to all humanity. Space tools are multifaceted and they strongly support the implementation of actions called for in the global development agenda.

It is therefore important that we look into ways and means of advancing our work to achieve concrete and tangible results in addressing the on-going global process leading towards the establishment of Sustainable Development Goals and in meeting the post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

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