



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
at the United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee
17 October 2014

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

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time my delegation intervenes in this Committee during the current session, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and the Bureau on your election and to assure you of my delegation's support and best wishes.

Since the earliest days of human history, humanity has looked to the sky with wonder, longing to understand celestial realities and their meaning in relation to humanity itself. Because of the fundamental questions it has always raised, the exploration of the universe has also deepened the understanding of faith and its rapport with science. The Holy See believes that faith is capable of both expanding and enriching the horizons of reason; thus, it rejoices in the marvelous progress of science, seeing it both as a product of the enormous God-given potential of the human mind and as manifestation of the vastness and richness of creation.

Our responsibility is to ensure that the fruits of these advances also benefit the poor around the world. My delegation is fully aware of the constraints to a universal access to the beneficial uses of outer space, considering the huge investments put into explorations and questions related to intellectual property, patents, etc. However, in a time when outer space has become a huge economic asset and hosts information and communications technologies, States must work together to ensure that these benefits do not become yet another cause of increasing economic and social inequalities, but rather a shared resource for the common good of the entire global community.

Vital to promoting this common good is ensuring the peaceful use of outer space. To this end, the ongoing discussion on the development of an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities represents a positive step toward furthering a fairer and safer use of outer space. It would undoubtedly help toward preventing an arms race in outer space and, consequently, toward averting a new, grave threat to international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation cannot underline enough the use of outer space toward an ever greater understanding of our planet. Satellites monitor the health of oceans and forests. They provide data on water cycles, climate patterns and other atmospheric phenomena. We trust that this knowledge can convince us to change lifestyles and practices detrimental to our environment. If we do not work together, there will be no winners, only losers.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Holy See wishes to highlight the use of satellites in the diffusion of knowledge and the elimination of illiteracy. Indeed, satellites can reach not only those places where illiteracy is a thing of the past, but also those where many still cannot read or write, especially in far-flung areas. However, care must be taken that this outer space technology does not become an instrument of dominion and a vehicle to impose certain cultures and values on others.

Mister Chairman,

Space environment should be preserved as the common heritage of humanity. It is the Holy See's belief that we are only its temporary stewards, with the unwritten but morally compelling responsibility to preserve it for future generations.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.