



General Assembly

Thirteenth Session

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Fourth Committee – Special Political and Decolonization Committee

This group works on special topics. It used to help colonies get independence. By 1990 most colonies were independent. For this reason, it added “Special Political” to its name and began to look at other issues not covered by other committees.

There are 17 non-self-governing-territories. These are areas of the world under the control of a state but not strictly part of that state. Some examples are Bermuda, Western Sahara, and Guam. Every year this group discusses what should happen with these areas.

The “Special Political” part of this group looks at other questions that do not fit in the other committees. They look at issues affecting Palestinian refugees, atomic radiation and how to use space for peace. Also, they discuss the topics of peacekeeping, land mines, and public information. The University for Peace is also on their agenda.

Agenda Item 52.A – International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Guiding Questions

Space begins at the border of Earth’s atmosphere. The *Outer Space Treaty* states that space is for all states. No country can claim anything in space – it is for all of humanity to share. With your fellow delegates you need to find a way to work towards making the following goals a reality.

- How can developing countries be supported so that they have access to space?
- What can countries do to ensure that space remains a peaceful place? How can we keep weapons out of space?
- How can states work together better to explore space, share technology, and information?

Background

Humans have always been curious about outer space. In 1865 Jules Verne wrote From the Earth to the Moon about three people who are shot out of a large gun and land on the moon. His book became very popular and shows it is a topic people that interests many people.

During World War II many countries were experimenting with rockets. In fact, it was during WWII that humans first sent an object into space. After the war, many countries continued to experiment with rockets and by October 1957 the USSR (now Russia) sent the first satellite into space. Less than a month later they sent up a dog which was the first animal in orbit. Over the next 15 years, the U.S. and the USSR would compete in what history calls the Space Race. The USSR sent the first human into space but the United States is the only country to land a man on the moon.

Background

The Space Race was positive because new technologies were created but people were also worried. What if a country put weapons in space? The U.S. at one time had a plan called Project A119 to explode a nuclear bomb on the moon. The USSR had a program called Almaz that made space stations with a cannon that could shoot in space.

The United Nations believes that space should be used for peaceful purposes. During the 1950s and 1960s the UN talked a lot about how countries can use space peacefully. They created the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space Committee. They also helped create the “Outer Space Treaty”. This treaty says no country can put weapons of mass destruction in space or on an object in space – like the moon.

One of the biggest problems with space is junk. It sounds funny but there is a lot of loose materials in space and left in orbit. This is called space debris. There are 500 000 pieces of junk that are being monitored as they orbit the Earth. 19 000 of those pieces of debris circling the Earth are bigger than 5 cm. This can damage spaceships, satellites and anything put into orbit. Some of the debris is natural (meteoroids) and some is man-made. A lot of the debris is fragments. In 2007, China destroyed an old satellite with a missile. In 2008, the U.S. did the same. The debris was left in space. All the debris moves at 28 000 kph. At this speed, even a paint fleck can cause damage to a space ship. To continue using space safely we need to clean up space debris and come up with solutions so we do not have it in the future.

The UN is planning its first space mission. The Sierra Nevada Corporation has partnered with the UN. They will use a Dream Chaser spacecraft to bring experiments and satellites into Earth’s orbit. All countries can apply but there will be a focus on developing states. This could help these countries with science and technology development. It is important that all countries have the opportunity to use space for positive outcomes. This mission is planned for 2021. The deadline for submission was November 2017.

The UN has been encouraging the creation of regional centres for space science and technology education. There are centres in Mexico, Brazil, India, China, Jordan, Nigeria and Morocco. The goal of these centres is to offer the best space science and technology education to developing nations. Developing countries need to improve their knowledge and expertise when it comes to space. Several states in Africa now have space programs including South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria and Egypt. In fact, the African Union is working on an African Outer Space Program for the entire continent.

A lot of people think exploring space is an “extra” that states do when they have a lot of money to spend. However, exploring space in the modern world is important to many countries to keep them competitive and healthy. Satellite imaging and GPS are tools that can help a country develop. In 2015, the UN launched the Sustainable Development Goals. Exploring space can help reach the goal of ending poverty and hunger. For example, satellites can be used to track the herding of animals. This can help a country plan where they will build roads and markets. Also, the internet can be provided through satellite. This can help connect people from remote areas to the larger world easily and cheaply (one day).

There are many other space-based solutions to the world’s problems. For example, there was a major outbreak of Ebola in Guinea. Tele-epidemiology is the control of the disease using communications equipment. During an epidemic, time is the most important factor.

Recent Developments

Outer Space Treaty

This treaty forms the basis for international space law and entered into force on 10 October 1967. It bans weapons of mass destruction from space and says no country can 'claim' the moon or any other planet or object. It also maintains that space should be used for peaceful purposes.

The Rescue Agreement

This agreement gives more detail about Article V in the Outer Space Treaty and entered into force on 3 December 1968. It states all members of the treaty should help astronauts that need help and this was meant to protect astronauts who accidentally landed in other countries. Also, if space technology lands in another country it must be returned.

Liability Convention

This document states that a country that launches something into space is responsible if it causes damage. It entered into force on 1 September 1972. It has only been used once when the USSR satellite Kosmos 954 crashed in Canada in 1978 and left radioactive pieces across Northern Canada. Canada charged the USSR C\$6 million. In 1979 NASA's Skylab crashed in Australia and NASA was fined \$400 for littering but never paid.

Registration Convention

In this convention each state needs to tell the UN about the orbits of all their space objects. It entered into force on 15 September 1976. Today, over 92% of all space objects are registered and you can view the online register: <http://bit.ly/25WC5mW>. 1200 of the objects orbiting Earth are satellites.

Moon Agreement

This treaty says the moon and all natural objects in space should benefit all countries and people. It entered into force on 11 July 1984. It bans military use of the moon and other natural objects in space. However, this is a failed treaty because only 5 countries have ratified it. None of the countries have space programs that can send humans into space. The main reason countries do not want to sign it is because it says if a country takes resources out of space it needs to be shared with all nations.

Space Technologies: What has space research given us?**Baby Formula****Athletic Shoes****Freeze Dried Food****Memory Foam****Wireless Headsets****Home Insulation****Foil Blankets****Land Mine Removal****LEDs****Camera Phones**

Research Questions

1. Does your state have a space agency? If so, what are its goals? If not, how can it get the help needed to develop one?
2. Research some of the ways that space debris is becoming a problem. How would weapons in space make this problem worse?
3. The 3 main parts of the EU International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities are:
 - All countries have the right to use space for peaceful purposes.
 - Countries should not attack or interfere with the space objects of other countries.
 - Countries can use space for defense.

Do you think your country could agree to these terms? Why or why not?

4. Why is space exploration important for developing nations?
5. Do you think your country can agree to no weapons in space? Why or why not? Why might some countries want the option of having weapons in space?
6. Research the Sustainable Development Goals. How can space exploration and science help meet some of these goals?
7. Look at some of the space treaties. How do these treaties help keep peace in space? What needs to be added/changed?
8. Does the problem exist in your community?
9. Who is working on it? NGOs, not for profits, other groups or individuals?
10. Knowing about this problem, how does it impact your world view?
11. How could you make an impact on this issue through your life choices?

Resources

Source / Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
<i>United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs</i>	http://www.unoosa.org/	Information about treaties and how countries work together to use space peacefully.
<i>Space Law</i>	http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/space-law-curriculum.html	Documents to help teach space law in schools.
<i>UN SPIDER</i>	http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/un-spider/index.html	Information about the UN's use of space technology to respond to disasters and emergencies.
<i>International Asteroid Warning Network</i>	http://iawn.net/	An international organization that tracks Near Earth Objects (NEOs)
<i>Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space</i>	http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/copuos/index.html	Information on what the committee does to keep space a peaceful place.
<i>Sierra Nevada Corporation</i>	https://www.sncorp.com/press-releases/snc-unoosa-dream-chaser-call-for-interest/	Information about the UN space launch in partnership with SNC.
<i>NASA</i>	https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/news/orbital_debris.html	General information about space debris.
<i>Face 2 Face Africa</i>	https://face2faceafrica.com/article/top-5-african-countries-advanced-space-programs	Info about 5 countries in the continent of Africa that have space programs.
<i>European Space Agency</i>	http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Preparing_for_the_Future/Space_for_Earth/ESA_and_the_Sustainable_Development_Goals	Information about how space and the Sustainable Development Goals are connected.