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.

Prepared by David Drouin

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.

Recent Developments

- One of the biggest problems with space is 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.
- 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 for the UN space mission but there will be a focus on developing states. This could help these countries with science and technology development. This mission is planned for 2021.
- 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.
- Several states in African 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.
- 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. 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).
- In 2015, the UN launched the Sustainable Developments Goals. Exploring space can help reach the goal of ending poverty and hunger.
- Tele-epidemiology is the control of the disease using communications equipment. During an epidemic, time is the most important factor and so space technology is important for being successful.

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Treaties & Agreements

Outer Space Treaty

- ✓ This treaty forms the basis for international space law.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ It entered into force on 3 December 1968.
- ✓ States all members of the treaty should help astronauts that need help and this was meant to protect astronauts who accidently landed in other countries.
- ✓ If space technology lands in another country it must be returned.

Liability Convention

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ In 1979 NASA's Skylab crashed in Australia and NASA was fined $400 for littering but never paid.

Registration Convention

- ✓ Each state needs to tell the UN about the orbits of all their space objects. I
- ✓ t 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.
- ✓ Entered into force on 11 July 1984.
- ✓ It bans military use of the moon and other natural objects in space.
- ✓ This is a failed treaty because only 5 countries have ratified it 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

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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. How does being a delegate from a different country help you understand this problem in your community?

10. How do the choices you make in your life help resolve this problem?

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Resources

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