**Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**

Introduction

In recent years, technology has advanced so much that humans are now capable of leaving the surface of Earth. Outer space in the immediate surroundings has been explored, but similar to technology used irresponsibly, it can be exploited for purposes such as spying, weapons, or terrorizing. With the potential negatives of space exploration in mind, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its seventy-seven members, including inter-and non-governmental organizations, monitor launchings and work towards the common goal of ensuring that the regions of outer space are used ethically and responsibly.

Resolutions stemming from this body consists of factors including: maintaining close contact with organizations concerned with outer space matters, providing information on space activities, but not duplicating technical and scientific exchanges, and lastly, to promote cooperation internationally in outer space activities. This committee contains a Scientific, Technical, and Legal subcommittee that meets annually in Vienna to implement decisions that comply with the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) Treaty, which was intended primarily to prevent outer space from becoming the next battlefield.

At the 2006 meeting, the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) was created to "ensure that all countries and international and regional organizations have access to and develop the capacity to use all types of space-based information to support the full disaster management cycle".

The European Union (EU) has also had a hand in space security by initiating the International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities (ICoC). The intent of the principles and guidelines are outlined: that “[it is] all countries’ inheritable right to use space for peaceful purposes; protection of security and reliability of space objects in orbit; consideration for states’ legitimate defense interests.”

This code of conduct is in place to have security benefits made available quickly in order to create rules for “both civil and security space activities.”

Topic History

During the late 1950’s, the world’s firstsatellite was launched. Immediately, the United Nations sought to prohibit the use of space for “military purposes and placement of weapons of mass destruction.”

International space law became a possibility when the General Assembly agreed to the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space in 1967, which outlined how the moon and other celestial bodies could not be claimed by individual nations or used for placing nuclear weapons in or around them. In the 1980s, after more innovation on satellite technologies, there was a proposal in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to prevent anti-satellite weapons. In 1993, this same group released a confidence-building report on outer space, which ensured that the provisions that the CD was making were being received well by other nations. As recent as 2006, the draft version of this proposal was submitted to the CD by the governments of People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation. In January 2011, the General Assembly created a group of governmental experts (GGE) to study transparency and confidence building measures (TCBMs) that were being implemented in outer space. Three sessions were held by the GGE, and their report was submitted on the 68th meeting of the General Assembly. The report outlined a framework on how to go about having experts visit national space facilities, risk reduction, and the process of exchanging information between states regarding space policy and activities. There was also a brief exclamation to have the Office of Disarmament Affairs, UN entities, and the Office of Outer Space Affairs to coordinate and reinforce one another.

Current Situation

The fifty-seventh session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space met on June 2014 in New York during the sixty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Over the duration of the assembly, the Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had conversations varying from the developments in global navigation satellite systems, long-term sustainability of outer space activities, space debris, and even on the weather in space. The Legal committee’s report on its fifty-third session held discussed the capacity of building in space, legislation for peaceful exploration and usage of outer space, space debris litigation measures, and a “general exchange of information on non-legally binding United Nations instruments on outer space.”

From the Legal Committee’s report, there was talk of United Nations treaties being applied to outer space. The European Telecommunications Satellite Organization - Intergovernmental Organization (EUTELSAT-IGO) recently declared that it had accepted the rights and obligations under the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space. This allowed for more transparency for all 49 members involved in EUTELSAT-IGO. Along with talks of accepting and ratifying treaties, there was discussion on revising the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space. With powerful mechanisms in an unstable environment such as the void of space, this was a crucial conversation to have in terms of regulating the Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space. The review called for ensuring that whatever was being conducted in outer space needed to be in the best interest of preserving life and having peaceful outcomes. This also led to the conclusion that the Legal and Scientific and Technical subcommittees would need to communicate more in order to appropriately look over the use of nuclear power in outer space as it pertains to new legal instruments. Additionally, the assembly had talks about space and water as well as the climate change in space. When presentations were completed from various countries, it was stated that the assembly had the overall opinion that, with proper resources and space-derived data, policymakers could begin to make better decisions when it comes to not wasting water resources. Some of the covered topics about water dealt with “management of water resources by remote sensing in Syria” and “use of Earth observation data for water resources assessment and management in India.”

With the space-derived data, countries could monitor climate change, floods, droughts, and improve forecasts all from technologies in space. Dealing specifically with climate change, the committee reviewed satellite data that could detect changes in the sea-level rise, flooding, and storms and how all this data can help international assessments made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

**Directive**

With all of the committees and intergovernmental groups involved with the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, there is a great deal of scrutiny over how space will be used in the coming years. The committee needs to continue to examine the future retrieving satellite data and contributing to research to determine global trends for water conservation and conserving bio-systems. There also needs to be routine check-ups on satellites and nuclear powered mechanisms in orbit for safety issues as well as ethical checks. If too many objects are near orbit, the chance of a collision increases, so monitoring the location and status of the major objects in space needs to be a committee priority so as to not cause expensive and potentially life-threatening accidents.

With increased privatization of activities in space, COPUOS has stated that it will need to move forward with being the overall governing body of outer space for all organizations, public or private, that reside in outer space.

With uncertainty to how every piece of equipment in space is being used, there may be organizations determined to sabotage various satellites or mechanisms with the intent to cause harm. In this case, self-defence measures need to be implemented and evacuation procedures on human operated-craft need to be prioritized to prevent heavy casualties in the case of sabotage. If there ever were an accident, collision, or an excess of space debris, a cleaning procedure would need to be implemented to clear the path for satellites to travel without a chance of piercing expensive and sensitive equipment.

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