



STATEMENT OF THE G-77 AND CHINA DURING THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE, 7-16 JUNE 2017, DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR REZA NAJAFI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Agenda Item 4: GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

Mr Chairman,

1. On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to express our satisfaction for your successful Chairmanship of the 59th session of this Committee and assure you of our full support and cooperation for the fruitful conclusion of the current session.
2. The Group further takes the opportunity to thank the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, Ms. Simonetta Di Pippo, for her opening remarks, and the Secretariat for the excellent preparations made for this session, including the briefing that took place on the 18th of May.
3. The Group would like to welcome New Zealand as a new Member of the Committee. The Group celebrates that new states become interested in the work of this Committee and its Subcommittees expressing their wish to get involved in our discussions and their intention to contribute to the exchange of views in outer space related matters. The expansion of COPUOS, including through the participation of developing countries, is a clear sign that more states become aware of the benefits of peaceful uses of outer space for the humankind. Therefore, we welcome the applications submitted by Bahrain and Denmark to become new Members of COPUOS.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Today we are opening the 60th session of this Committee, and we find ourselves surrounded by many important anniversaries: we celebrated earlier this year the 50th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Outer Space Treaty, and in a few months we will be commemorating the 60th anniversary of the launch into space of the first human-made Earth Satellite, Sputnik 1. We will also celebrate the 10th anniversary of the endorsement by the General Assembly of the Space Debris mitigation Guidelines. Finally, the year 2018 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the first UNISPACE conference, held in Vienna, in 1968. UNISPACE+50 will be a good opportunity to chart the future role of the Committee, its Subcommittees and the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs and to take stock of the contributions of the three previous UNISPACE conferences (UNISPACE I, II and III). During this session we have the task to finalize many important decisions regarding the preparatory work for UNISPACE+50. In this regard, the Group considers that it is essential to allow delegations enough time for examination and discussion of the documents that will constitute the expected outcomes of UNISPACE+50. The Group is looking forward to receive said documents in a timely manner, in order to allow countries to make the relevant internal consultations as well as to coordinate within their regional groups before the beginning of negotiations in the next session of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies next year.
5. These events reflect the importance of ensuring that the agenda for COPUOS and its subcommittees evolves at the same pace as the developments in the scientific area, to enable countries with different levels of technological capabilities to be well informed of these developments including creation of instruments for the regulation of outer space activities, as well as to be engaged in the decision making process. In this regard, technical aspects such as international cooperation and transfer of technology play a decisive role in facilitating developing countries participation in the exchange of views, and serve as effective means to build capacities in countries with emerging space capabilities and the application of the scientific advances

in benefit of all humankind, becoming real actors and not merely passive observers.

6. Activities in outer space in the last decades have radically increased. Newcomers from governmental or non-governmental entities from all around the world have not only shown the vast potentials of outer space, but also have shown its limitations and our vulnerabilities. Because of this new reality, much work remains to be done and many subjects should be considered in the legal international framework of space activities. The Group is of the view that security and safety of outer space will be warranted if all activities in this environment are carried out in accordance with applicable international law, rules, regulations, and recommendations. Mr. Chairman,

7. The Group underscores its firm conviction that the use and exploration of the Outer Space shall be carried out exclusively for peaceful purposes, for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and in conformity with the body of applicable international law.

8. In line with this, it reiterates its strict adherence to the principles governing the activities of States in the exploration and use of Outer Space, including:

a) Universal and equal access to outer space for all countries without discrimination, regardless of their level of scientific, technical and economic development as well as the equitable and rational use of the Outer Space for the benefit of all mankind.

b) The principle of non-appropriation of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, which cannot be appropriated by any State, by claiming sovereignty, use, occupation or any other form.

c) The commitment by States to the strict use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

d) The non-weaponization of outer space, which shall never be used for the installation of weapons of any kind, and as province of mankind, its strict use for the improvement of living conditions and peace among peoples that inhabit our planet.

e) International cooperation in the development of space activities especially those referred to in the Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the benefit and in the interest of all States taking in particular account the needs of developing countries.

9. We are convinced that the role of the United Nations treaties and principles on outer space provide the basis for regulating outer space activities, however we are likewise well aware that there is still much work to be undertaken to warrant a safe and sustainable environment. In this regard, we reiterate that COPUOS with its Subcommittees is the adequate forum to discuss matters related to the peaceful uses of outer space including the moon and other celestial bodies and that interaction between the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee should be strengthened in order to adjust the development of space law to the major scientific and technical advances in the area.

10. In this vein, we celebrate all the efforts carried out within the Working Group on the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Peter Martinez of South Africa. The G-77 and China is of the view that the outcome of this Working Group should avoid any measures that would limit or hamper access to space by countries with emerging space capabilities, bearing in mind that the envisaged voluntary guidelines will be an important tool for preserving outer space solely for peaceful purposes.

11. The Group reaffirms the importance of preventing an arms race in outer space, with an appropriate and effective verification and we call upon all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the peaceful use of outer space to prevent an arms race there and to refrain from

actions contrary to that objective. In this regard, we note that transparency and confidence-building measures could play a useful role. The Group believes that preservation of outer space in the long-term requires the international community to ensure that no weapons will ever be placed there.

Mr. Chairman,

12. Developing countries are increasingly engaged in space activities and in the discussions in the COPUOS. While several Member States of this Group have achieved important milestones in space activities, others are starting to include space activities into their national programs. This fact affirms our recognition towards the potential, importance and impact of space activities and their relevance for reaching the 2030 Development Goals.

13. In this regard, it is imperative to re-double the efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived from outer space activities. In order to enhance international cooperation in outer space activities, it is vital to promote a wider and more active involvement of developing countries. To this end, capacity building is a key factor in the expansion of the abilities of those working in the field, permitting them to gain expertise and knowledge from the nations experienced in outer space activities.

Mr. Chairman,

14. Several of the issues to be discussed during this session are of paramount importance to developing countries. The Group is willing to engage in the discussions during this session of the Committee and will express its views under specific agenda items.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

AGENDA ITEM 6: REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON ITS FIFTY FOURTH SESSION

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to comment on some issues that were dealt with during the last session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and that we consider of utmost relevance for developing countries.

2. One of them is the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit and its utilization and applications. In this regard, the Group once more would like to draw the attention to the fact that the geostationary orbit — a limited natural resource clearly in danger of saturation — needs to be used rationally, efficiently and economically, in conformity with the provision of the Radio Regulations, so that countries or groups of countries may have equitable access to those orbits and frequencies, taking into account the special needs of the developing countries and the geographical situation of particular countries. We underscore that the geostationary orbit shall not be subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use, repeated use or occupation, or by any other means, and that its utilization is governed by applicable international law, including the Outer Space Treaty and ITU instruments and regulations.

3. Another topic on the agenda of this Subcommittee that is very much connected to the long term sustainability of outer space activities is the one related to space debris. This is a worrying issue that calls for immediate measures. For that reason, we encourage the voluntary implementation of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of COPUOS and celebrate that day-by-day more States are adopting concrete actions to mitigate space debris, including the improvement of the design of launch vehicles and space crafts, the deorbiting of satellites, passivation, end-of-life operations and the development of specific software and models for space debris mitigation. Moreover, the Group would like to emphasize that the solution should not impose an undue burden on the space programs of developing nations.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Space technology has advanced rapidly in recent years. However, a number of countries - mainly developing ones - still lack the human, technical and financial resources required to conduct even the most basic space-related activities, such as meteorology, communications and natural-resource management. Thus, the work of the Program on Space Applications bridges the gap in capacity-building, education, research and technical advisory services for countries that are in an emerging stage in the field.

5. The transfer of technology needs to be promoted through capacity building and by making technology accessible. Therefore, the Group calls upon OOSA and its Member States for greater support to the training programs of the regional centers affiliated to the United Nations, and to conduct widest exchange and cooperation among different regional centers, with the aim of enhancing North-South and South-South cooperation to facilitate the transfer of technology among nations. The Group calls upon OOSA and Member States to make available more opportunities for academic linkages, long term fellowships and collaboration with national and regional institutions in the field outer space especially in developing countries.

6. In line with this, we commend the support of the Program in the activities carried out especially in countries pertaining to this Group. We welcome future initiatives in which OOSA provides the tools of the Program to develop space capacities of the countries. Mr. Chairman,

7. Space science and its applications play an important role in having access to geospatial information in areas such as tele-health and tele-epidemiology, tele-education, disaster management, climate change, environmental protection, urban and rural development and Earth monitoring. The constant examination of ways in which space science and technology and their applications could contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should remain part of the work of COPUOS.

8. Information gathered through remote sensing provides an important source for disaster management and early warning. The Group would like to recall that remote sensing activities shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, taking into particular consideration the needs of the developing countries, promoting international cooperation to permit other States to participate in the activities, in accordance with the Principles relating to remote sensing of the Earth from space.

9. Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Group would like to briefly address the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, specifically in the geo-stationary orbit and low-Earth atmosphere. We consider that the Subcommittee should address the problem of potential collisions of nuclear powered space objects in orbit and the incidents or emergencies that may be caused by the accidental reentry of such an object in the Earth's atmosphere and impact on its surface, and the consequences of such an event to the health and life of people and the ecosystem. The Group considers that increased attention should be given to these issues through adequate strategies, long term planning and regulations, including the Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Sources Applications in Outer Space.

Thanks Mr. Chairman.

AGENDA ITEM 7: REPORT OF THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON ITS FIFTY SIXTH SESSION

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to comment on some issues that were dealt with during the last session of the Legal Subcommittee and that we deem of utmost relevance for developing countries.

2. One of them is the debate on the definition and delimitation of outer space. It is worrying that despite lengthy debates, no consensus to date has been reached. The Group would like to underscore once more that the definition and delimitation of outer space is a very important topic that should be kept on the agenda of

this Subcommittee and that more work should be done in order to delimitate the legal regime applicable to the air and to the outer space. In this regard, we commend all the efforts made by the Chair of the Working on Definition and delimitation of Outer Space, José Monserrat Filho, and encourage all delegations to contribute to the discussion in a constructive manner.

3. The Group considers that more effective and proactive efforts are needed in order to increase awareness on the importance of complying with international space law when implementing space activities and programs. In order to achieve this aim, capacity building in space law becomes a fundamental tool that should be enhanced through international cooperation. Therefore, the Group calls for a greater support by OOSA and Member States to foster cooperation of both North-South and South-South to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise in the field of international space law.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Space debris, nuclear power sources and the geostationary orbit are only some examples of topics that are part of the agendas of both Subcommittees although they are addressed from different standpoints. Their complexity and relevance reveal that a simple focus is not the appropriate approach. For this reason, we consider that the interaction and coordination between these two bodies is essential to ensure a comprehensive discussion of their different aspects bearing in mind that the work of the two Subcommittees should not be conceived as unconnected compartments but complementary. The Group is looking forward to the discussion of the establishment of a mechanism that would increase the coordination between these bodies as an outcome of the UNISPACE +50 process.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Non-legally binding instruments have been an important instrument to guide States and other relevant actors in conducting their activities in outer space in a safe and secure manner. However, although they cover aspects that have not been addressed by binding instruments they should not replace the valuable source of treaties and customary international law. In this vein, the Group is of the view that the development of instruments of soft-law should not oust the continuous update of international space law, which on the other hand should keep the core principles unchanged.

6. While serving as a forum to encourage Member States to adhere to the five UN treaties, COPUOS should also anchor the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building to those Member States who have identified the need for supplementary regulation through the exchange of information on best practices to improve their domestic laws.

Mr Chairman,

7. The Group has reiterated its support to the agenda item related to small satellites. This type of satellite is a valuable instrument in the development of space capabilities of developing countries that lack the necessary resources for ambitious space programs. Consequently, some kind of guidance in the operation of these satellites is necessary in order to ensure its appropriate development, while not posing a high threshold on developing countries with emerging space programs. The Group is of the view that in general, all international rights and obligations of the States with respect to big satellites are equally relevant for the conduct of space activities with the use of small satellites. UN treaties, the ITU Constitution, Convention and Radio Regulations, as well as certain non-binding instruments, such as the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, are the already existing legal framework to be applicable to space objects, including small satellites.

8. The Group also welcomes the maintenance of the agenda item within the Legal Sub-Committee related to potential legal models for activities in exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources. In light of the increasing participation of the private sector in space activities, the Group is of the view that an

international legal framework that clearly defines and guides commercial activities in outer space could play an important role in expanding the use of outer space and stimulate space activities for the benefit of humanity. The Group considers that, besides the need for a broad debate about the implications of these activities, the developing countries shall not be excluded from the benefits of space exploration and their rights shall be considered in the discussion. Moreover, these new economic models shall not compromise the sustainability of space activities.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.