VIENNA CHAPTER

STATEMENT OF THE G-77 & CHINA AT THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (UNISPACE III) VIENNA - 19-30 JULY 1999 DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR YOGESH M. TIWARI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA

Mr. President,

1. On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to extend to you our congratulations on having been elected President of this august assembly. To you and to the members of your Bureau, we would like to extend our support so that the conclusions of this conference could be successful. The Group would also like to extend its appreciation to the Director General of the United Nations, the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs and his dedicated staff who have done a remarkable job in producing the extensive documentation and executing the detailed planning required for a global event such as UNISPACE III.

2. It would be recalled that the decision to hold this conference was taken by the UN General Assembly under the theme "Space benefits for humanity in the 21st century". We note with appreciation the statements by the President of Austria and the Secretary- General of the United Nations. This is a unique opportunity for us to assess the significant developments in this area since the last UNISPACE conference was held in 1982 and to define our goals and objectives for the new millennium.

3. We are happy to report that countries belonging to the Group of 77 and China have played an active role in the regional preparatory conferences which were held in May 1998 in Malaysia for the Asia and the Pacific Region, October 1998 in Chile for the Latin American and the Caribbean Region, and in October 1998 in Morocco for the African and Western Asia region. These regional preparatory conferences have formulated specific recommendations and action plans which have been the basis of the positions which we support as a Group which have been of great value in framing the final objectives of UNISPACE III.

4. All of us here at this conference should take this unique opportunity to adopt measures which will enhance international cooperation in space activities so as to make benefits from space activities available to all the peoples of the world. We should structure the on-going and future activities in this area so as to contribute both to economic security and to sustainable development, globally, and particularly for developing countries.

5. At the outset, and in conformity with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 53/45, the Group of 77 and China reaffirms that outer space is a common heritage of humankind and that all States, especially those most advanced in space technologies, should not use space for arms race or any related military activity as was also stated by the Secretary-General. This requirement is essential for promotion of international co-operation in the peaceful uses and exploration of outer space, with the ultimate objective of ensuring harmonious and peaceful existence on a safe and hospitable planet for all peoples and all generations.

6. The Group is concerned about the continuing use of outer space for military or military related activities. Even now, military related expenditure in space accounts for a substantial proportion of the total. For obvious reasons, military activities adversely affect international co-operation in the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space. Hence there is urgent need for demilitarisation of outer space and reduction in military related activities, as clearly stated in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 53/76. The amount reserved for these activities, or at least part thereof may be used for enhancing sustainable economic development of the developing countries through peaceful uses of outer space.

7. The Group, which is also concerned with the increased use of radioisotopes for power generation in space objects, reaffirms the need for a comprehensive overview of the management of incidents or emergencies that may be created when nuclear power sources employed in space systems accidentally re-enter the Earth's atmosphere and impact on its surface, endangering the health and life of peoples and contaminating vast areas of land. The present Conference is an excellent occasion to take note of this concern and to emphasise the organic relationship that exists between the protection of spacial environment and the preservation of a healthy environment on Earth, both being equally important in the implementation of the Agenda 21 adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992).

8. Increased attention should moreover, be given to the problem of potential collisions of nuclear powered space objects with an estimated number of 8500 space debris, steadily rising, and which are located at present in the geo-stationary orbit and low Earth atmosphere. The Group urges the international Community to elaborate adequate strategies and long-term planning to deal with this phenomenon, which may endanger the sustainable development of space activities and international co-operation in this promising domain.

9. We note with appreciation the excellent programmes and proposals contained in the draft report for the conference. There are some extremely useful and concrete ideas outlined for programmes for education and training, inter-organisational cooperation, regional cooperation, technology transfer and other areas. However, for these to become meaningful projects, there is urgent need for adequate funding. The Group, therefore, urges all Member States to generously fund such projects and programmes so that they can realise their fullest potential.

10. Several of the issues which we will discuss in the next few days in this conference are of paramount importance to developing countries. Remote sensing and other aspects of space science and technology have a vast area of application, particularly with regard to water resources, oceanography and environment. To mention just a few, through this new technology, it is possible to have disaster preparedness, early warning and mitigation in the case of natural disasters; it is possible to educate decision makers and take preventive action for environmental degradation and related hazards; it is possible to improve agricultural planning and to measure and forecast drought and desertification. Similarly, satellite-based systems could be used for tele-education, tele-medicine, family welfare and emergency communications in remote areas which would be of special significance for countries with infrastructure problems. Education and training for scientists and staff in developing countries is also crucial as is the need for a free flow of scientific information and data exchange.

11. In this context, Resolution 51/122 of the UN General Assembly, the Declaration on International Cooperation and Use of Outer Space for the benefit of and in the interest of all States, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries, should be adequately emphasised. It provides the basic framework in which international cooperation on the exploration and use of outer space should occur, for the benefit of and in the interest of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

12. In promoting international cooperation on space activities, priority should be given to projects that effectively contribute to develop the country's potentialities on human and technological and economic resources. Efforts should be devoted to facilitate the timely use of information resulting from space technologies in the decision-making processes, both in public and private sectors.

13. Natural disasters are a matter of great concern to all States. The next decade (2000-2010) should be devoted to develop an integrated strategy for the use of space technology in the assessment, prevention, mitigation and reduction of natural disasters. A better understanding of climate phenomena with global implications such as "El Nino" could contribute to the timely reaction to natural disasters, through the adoption of effective preventive measures.

14. The saying that we must "think globally and act locally" has a proven truth in it when we speak in the multilateral context. The decisions which we take in international conferences should be capable of being implemented at the ground level. At the same time, we must adopt decisions which keep in mind a wide

range of national and regional positions. We should provide a forum for free exchange of ideas and information on space science and technology with the ultimate aim of evolving strategies which would help in revitalising the developing world. At the time of UNISPACE II, there were only a few nations who had serious space programmes and the atmosphere was perhaps more competitive than cooperative. There was little day to day relevance for space technology in the life of the common man.

15. In the intervening period, a large number of applications of the ever widening technology have been identified which have a direct co-relation to the efforts to improve the quality of life for mankind.

16. In addition, the gigantic spread of scientific and associated industrial areas arising out of space technology development, offer special benefits to developing and developed countries alike in the sense of both commercial activities and the need to develop national systems. No longer is the space sector considered a remote and technical area of interest only to scientists and for space exploration alone. It is a vast and ever expanding new horizon. In this context, the objectives of UNISPACE III to which the Group attaches the highest importance are :

· To strengthen the capabilities of developing countries to use the applications of space research for economic, social and cultural development;

· To provide developing countries with opportunities to define their needs for space applications for development purposes, with particular emphasis on the needs of LDCs in the field of appropriate training and human resource development;

· To consider ways of expediting the use of space applications by Member States to promote sustainable development through the involvement of a larger number of developing countries in international research programmes, including micro satellites;

· To address the various issues related to education, training and technical assistance in space science and technology and their applications aimed at the development of indigenous capabilities in all States;

· To provide a valuable forum for a critical evaluation of space activities and to increase awareness among the general public regarding the benefits of space technology; and finally

· To strengthen international cooperation in the development and use of space technology and applications, for peaceful purposes, including spin off benefits.

For all these objectives to be realised, Mr. President, adequate funding is an essential pre-requisite.

17. Mr. President, I would like to raise an issue of special concern to the Group of 77 and China. This is the question of remote sensing data, including those of high resolution. Remote sensing has valuable applications of particular relevance for developing countries. These include weather forecasting (with special emphasis on disaster warning systems), agriculture (to supplement conventional sources) with reference to identifying arable lands and monitoring crops, controlling droughts; assessment of water sources, especially potable water sources; applications in disease control and health services and so on. Mr. President, certain areas such as weather forecasting are indeed public service areas and we would urge that these be treated as such and not as a commercial venture. In order for this technology application to be utilised, there must be easy access and assurance of continuity.

18. The cost of remote sensing data in general is an area of concern and although there has been a downward trend, recently more efforts are needed to further bring down costs of such data. In view of the contribution of remote sensing and related technologies towards the well being of the global community, the promise of international cooperation in this area should be the focus for the deliberations of this conference. There should also be a unified approach to developing a standard format for the acquisition, processing and handling of remote sensing data with a view to make it easily available to all countries. Only if this data is readily available at a reasonable cost, can there be a wider market for it among developing countries.

19. Another area of particular interest for the Group would be the question of utilising the communications networks opened up through space technologies. The Group would particularly emphasis the need to provide assistance to developing countries in assessing how space technology can help to meet their information and communication needs. It would also be necessary to study the feasibility of international and regional cooperative systems for satellite based broadcasting and communications for developing countries taking into account the needs of the developing countries particularly in the area of education and training.

20. In the area of spreading knowledge and building capacity relating to space technology, the Group is happy to note that several institutions from developing countries are also actively engaged in preparing educational material. The network of Regional Centres for Space Science and Technology Education located in developing countries is also a welcome development. These are based on the logical concept that by pooling the limited material and highly qualified human resources, developing countries can have educational and training centres of a very high calibre which could be used for training personnel specifically in areas such as remote sensing, geographic information, satellite meteorology, space communications and basic space science. Further development in all these areas is necessary and we would like to see greater support for and participation in the programmes of the regional centres. Also we would urge that more funding be made available for such activities which benefit the widest number of countries.

21. In consideration of the above, the Group of 77 and China is of the view that the United Nations should establish, as a matter of priority a special fund within the Office for Outer Space Affairs to assist in the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The G-77 and China would be tabling concrete proposals in the Vienna Declaration on the financing modalities on this specific fund.

22. The Group warmly welcomes the special programmes and activities of this conference directed at young people. The participation in the Youth Forum is, therefore, especially welcome and we all look forward to hearing the visions and perceptions of young space professionals around the world concerning future space endeavours. The teaching and promotion of space techniques and activities for young people, particularly astronomy should be included in the school programmes.

23. On information needs, we have already mentioned the need for uniform standards for data bases. We would also call for accessible networks and the need for cooperating not just at the national or regional but also at international level.

24. The technology transfer from space faring countries to developing countries needs to be promoted through availability of technology and through training opportunities. Space technology applications in developing countries must become truly operational and integrated into development activities to have any real significance. We would also call for better mechanisms for fostering South-South cooperation in technology development and transfer. We would, therefore, fully support the suggestion for a Technology Outreach Programme on Space for university educators (TOPS). Since the importance of TOPS would be to incorporate relevant aspects of space technology into curricula of educational institutions, it would have a multiplier effect on students, and, therefore, lead to broader local awareness of space technology. Again, within the mechanism of TOPS, the Group would welcome the encouragement of South-South cooperation which could be achieved at a relatively lower cost. Funding for programmes such as the TOPS programme again remains a major concern.

25. The Group would like to appeal to the international community including developing countries, to sign and ratify the five treaties and agreements which have been drawn up through the United Nations on matters relating to the peaceful uses of outer space which establish a sound legal regime governing space related activities.

26. As these treaties do ensure that activities in outer space will enhance the well being of all countries and humankind and promote international co-operation, these are of mutual interest to all of us present here and should be adhered to by all countries . The Treaties are the Outer Space Treaty of 1966, the Rescue Agreement of 1967, the Liability Convention of 1971, the Registration Convention of 1974 and the Moon Agreement of 1979.

27. We have indeed a unique mechanism before us in UNISPACE III to address these and other concerns. We must remember that billions of people from all the countries of the world have faith in the UN system and in assemblies such as these to address global needs and the needs of the developing countries with sincerity and purpose. In a spirit of cooperation and consensus, it is the hope of the Group that we will be able to address these issues and to come up with conclusions and recommendations which will contribute to global prosperity through the promotion of enhanced international cooperation in the peaceful use of space technology.

28. In conclusion, Mr. President, these issues must be adequately reflected in the Vienna Declaration and Action Plan to be adopted during the deliberations of this Conference, hoping that the positive agenda embodied in the recommendations of UNISPACE III, will constitute the cornerstone of a strengthened global co-operation for the peaceful uses of space in the new Millennium. It is earnest expectation of the G-77 and China that the positive ideas embodied in the Vienna Declaration and the Action Plan would be implemented in full and expeditiously.

Thank you.