

Union representative had given the impression of having lost sight of the question of the peaceful use of outer space; he had so concentrated his attention on the United States bases. Such methods would not lead to practical results.

10. In those circumstances, and considering that outer space was still shrouded in a veil of mystery, the only reasonable attitude would be to act in conformity with the proposal suggested in the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/L.220 sponsored by twenty Powers, including the Union of South Africa.

11. Mr. ORTIZ MARTIN (Costa Rica) said that a distinction had to be drawn between the two sides of the question of outer space. There was the scientific side: the exploration of outer space, its possible use for military purposes and the responsibilities of the United Nations in that regard. And there was the theoretical side: the study of the question from the angle of international public law. It was evident that it was premature to lay down legal principles which could not yet be applied whereas the real difficulties to be faced were not known.

12. The Costa Rican delegation supported the twenty-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.220), which recognized that all States had the right to carry out scientific exploration and which was intended to ensure that the conquest of outer space should be for the benefit of all mankind. That draft resolution provided also for the establishment of an *ad hoc* committee to study all the known facts in order to lay down legal rules consistent with the principles of justice. The United Nations could do no more and still remain in the realm of reality; it would be in a position to make appropriate rules at a later stage in the light of subsequent developments. It was important not to lose sight of the immense impact of great discoveries and their influence over men's minds. Man was still unaware of the consequences of his present efforts to unveil the secrets of nature.

13. Mr. NISOT (Belgium) said that there was an urgent need to undertake the study of the question of the peaceful use of cosmic space. No progress could be expected without a clarification of the various aspects

of the question by means of objective and disinterested study, and an attempt to determine with some degree of accuracy the potentialities of outer space for the benefit of mankind, the conditions and manner of using it and the ways and means of realizing those aims. It was particularly urgent to institute international co-operation in that field. At the present stage, the work of exploration and clearing the ground, which had to be kept separate from the disarmament aspect of the question, appeared to require priority treatment in a purely scientific spirit divorced from all controversial matters.

14. That was the spirit which had animated the draft resolution submitted by twenty Powers, including Belgium. That draft proposed the establishment of a committee to provide the General Assembly with certain preliminary information. The aim was to investigate possibilities in order to clarify the situation and make future achievements possible.

15. The role of international organizations in the matter should be made clear. Certain questions would first have to be decided, such as whether there existed at present any legal rules limiting the freedom of individual States or inter-State organizations in outer space. In the doctrine of international law several systems had been conceived. Those studies would perhaps help in finding the *lex ferenda* which could be proposed to States with some chance of being accepted. The problem was a complex one from the legal and political points of view. Accordingly, the draft resolution was aimed at conducting a preliminary investigation as a necessary step towards a degree of international co-operation commensurate with the aims to be achieved. In addition, the draft made ample provision for the assistance of the Secretary-General, upon whom it conferred even a power to make recommendations extending beyond the measures it expressly contemplated. The draft resolution did as much as possible at the present stage to provide the most appropriate method for defining the conditions for the peaceful use of cosmic space.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.

United Nations  
**GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTEENTH SESSION  
Official Records



FIRST COMMITTEE 986th  
MEETING

Monday, 17 November 1958,  
at 10.50 a.m.

NEW YORK

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Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael URQUIA (El Salvador).

AGENDA ITEM 60

Question of the peaceful use of outer space (A/3818 and Corr.1, A/3902, A/C.1/L.219, A/C.1/L.220) (*continued*):

- (a) The banning of the use of cosmic space for military purposes, the elimination of foreign military bases on the territories of other countries and international co-operation in the study of cosmic space;
- (b) Programme for international co-operation in the field of outer space

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. BRUCAN (Romania), challenging a statement made by the United States representative at the 982nd meeting on the nature of the relationship between the socialist countries in so far as it affected military bases on their territories, pointed out that under an agreement concluded between the Romanian and Soviet Union Governments, with the consent of the other signatories of the Warsaw Treaty, all Soviet forces had been withdrawn from Romania by 15 August 1958. The United States maintained bases in many countries. It asserted that its forces in foreign territory would leave at the request of the Governments of such territories, yet its forces in Okinawa had not been withdrawn and the base had not been liquidated, although that request had been made by the population of Okinawa in elections held in 1956 and again in 1958.

2. The mastering of outer-space missiles had added a new and important dimension to the threat of all-out war and the problem for the United Nations was to eliminate the possibility that destruction might come from or through outer space. Thus, the military aspect of the use of space was of paramount importance and should determine the approach of all delegations to the item under discussion. The USSR draft resolution (A/C.1/L.219) adopted that approach and presented a comprehensive plan for a solution. Its recommendations for international scientific co-operation were based on experience in other scientific fields. It held,

quite rightly, that only if the danger of the use of outer space for military purposes was removed could such co-operation benefit mankind.

3. The Western position on the use of outer space appeared to have undergone a significant change. During the twelfth session, the United States and other Western Powers had shown great interest in the military aspect of outer space, an interest clearly expressed in the United States memorandum of 12 January 1957 (A/C.1/783). They now appeared, however, to have lost that interest, though they were continuing to spend huge sums on rockets and other space missiles and on related research and experiments. Their apparent loss of interest could be explained only by their realization that they could not deal with the question of outer space in disarmament negotiations from their former position of strength. Indeed, the United States representative had stated (983rd meeting) that his Government maintained the position it had taken in the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission at London in 1957: it would detach intercontinental ballistic missiles from the complex of disarmament questions and conclude a separate agreement unconditionally banning such missiles. That position was puzzling, especially as the West attached conditions to agreement on all other aspects of disarmament, including the cessation of nuclear weapons tests. Yet the real danger to mankind was not rockets or missiles, but nuclear warheads with their tremendous destructive power. The West would maintain nuclear weapons on the grounds that they acted as a deterrent to war, yet it would not consider outer-space weapons as deterrents. That attitude could be explained by the fact that the United States had not until recently—that is, until the first artificial earth satellite was sent to orbit in space—understood the magnitude of new space developments.

4. The logical conclusion that should be drawn was that the Western policy of negotiating from "positions of strength" was no longer valid and that it was high time to proceed with equal regard for the security of all parties and renounce all efforts to secure unilateral advantage. The use of outer space and the question of military bases on foreign territory were inextricably linked: to bar the intercontinental ballistic missile from outer space while accepting intermediate range missiles in the atmosphere would secure a military advantage for United States bases to the detriment of the socialist countries. United States military bases on foreign territory were an overwhelming obstacle to disarmament and to peace. The United States argued that withdrawal of its forces from such places as Germany and Korea would remove them to too great a distance from the area concerned, while Soviet forces would be too close. In substance, the argument implied that the Power maintaining its troops within or close to its borders would always be at a disadvantage, while the Power with far-flung bases and troops

stationed on remote territories attempted to use that encroachment as an asset, in violation of all international standards. It followed that, to satisfy United States strategists, Soviet forces would have to leave their own territory for another continent. The insistence of the United States on maintaining bases on foreign territory was impeding the solution of many international issues and the question should therefore be taken up together with the banning of the military use of outer space.

5. Mr. JOHNSON (United States of America) emphasized that there were no differences within the United States Government, among its political parties or among the American people on the goal of dedicating outer space to peaceful purposes for the benefit of all mankind. Nor should there be any differences in the General Assembly in taking advantage of the unprecedented opportunity offered it, which was emphasized by the absence of the accumulated differences of the earth's long and troubled history, to ensure full, complete and immediate co-operation among all States to make the exploration of space a joint adventure for peaceful purposes. That was the only course to be followed.

6. He reviewed the various declarations, acts and resolutions adopted by the Congress of the United States in support of the view that the United Nations should assume leadership in promoting international co-operation in the exploration of outer space. That view of the Congress expressing the will of the American people was embodied in the twenty-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.220) and he commended it to the General Assembly for adoption. The United Nations could be assured of the continuing support of the United States Congress in the implementation of the aims stated in that draft resolution.

7. The first task of the General Assembly was to provide the means for the United Nations to encourage the exploration of space. The twenty-Power draft resolution set forth the first, essential steps which had to be completed before proceeding to more ambitious undertakings. To impede the implementation of those steps would be to obstruct progress towards the use of space for peaceful purposes. The United States recognized—as all men must—that the penetration into outer space was the concern of all mankind. If nations proceeded unilaterally, their penetration into space would become only an extension of their national policies. The unilateral success in space technology of nations given to aggression and tyranny on earth would only multiply their threat to peace. Thus, it was the interest of nations dedicated to peace that the opportunity of space should not be perverted to the end of aggression and control over earth by aggressors. Today outer space was free; no nation held a concession there; and it must remain that way. The tremendous opportunity open to the world must not be corrupted by bringing to it the antagonisms created by national policies. The success of the international co-operation which had been the basis of the work of the International Geophysical Year foretold the promise offered by an enlargement of goals and an intensification of efforts. If nations did not apply the lessons learned from co-operation to the space problem, or even if they delayed their application, the advances into that field might result only in adding a new dimension to warfare. It was the hope of the American people

that, out of the fresh start which space afforded for human co-operation, man might at last free himself of the waste of guarding himself against his ignorance of his neighbours and would come to understand his fellow man as never before.

8. Mr. KISELEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that international scientific co-operation in the study of cosmic space, of the kind displayed in carrying out the International Geophysical Year programme, would not be fully effective until a solution was found to the question of banning the use of cosmic space for military purposes. Many States were directing their efforts towards just such use of cosmic space; in 1958-59, according to The New York Times of 14 January 1958, twenty-four cents out of every dollar in the United States military budget was to be allocated for the development of rockets.

9. In his statement of 13 November (983rd meeting), Mr. Lodge had urged that, instead of waiting for the conclusion of a comprehensive disarmament agreement, the Committee should separate the question of the peaceful use of outer space from the various problems of disarmament and Mr. Johnson had now merely repeated what Mr. Lodge had said. The draft resolution submitted by the United States and nineteen other States (A/C.1/L.220) completely ignored the military aspects of the problem of cosmic space and the question of eliminating United States military bases on the territories of other countries, from which atomic and thermo-nuclear attacks could be launched against the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and other socialist countries. Since the Soviet Union possessed intercontinental ballistic missiles, the ruling circles of the United States were attempting to ban the military use of such missiles in cosmic space without at the same time liquidating their own military bases, from which medium- and short-range missiles could be launched against the Soviet Union; in that way, they hoped to place the Soviet Union in an unfavourable strategic position. If the United States wanted to protect its own security and that of all countries, it should support a ban on atomic and hydrogen weapons and the destruction of stockpiles of such weapons, since without atomic and hydrogen warheads the intercontinental missiles constituted no danger to anyone.

10. In addition to threatening the security of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, United States military bases served the purpose of combating the national liberation movement of the colonial peoples and influencing the policy of the countries in which the bases were situated. Far from helping to strengthen peace, United States military bases had the effect of subjecting the countries in which they were situated to the possibility of retaliatory blows.

11. After the launching of the first artificial earth satellite, the United States, on the pretext of offsetting the Soviet advance in the field of intercontinental ballistic missiles and restoring the military balance of power, had made intensive efforts to set up on the territories of other countries installations for launching missiles with atomic or hydrogen warheads. According to a statement of 30 April 1958 by Mr. Merten, a member of the Defence Committee of the West German Bundestag, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) planned to set up 1,248 rocket-launching pads in the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, Italy and other NATO States.

12. The Italian Government had agreed to the establishment of rocket-launching bases on its territory on the ground that they were essential to Italy's defence; it was noteworthy that the Italian representative, in his statement of 12 November (982nd meeting), while supporting a ban on the use of cosmic space for military purposes, had failed to mention the agreement for the construction of United States bases which were clearly directed against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. While Italian ruling circles had stressed the allegedly defensive character of the missile bases and had sought to minimize the danger they posed to a heavily populated country like Italy, Mr. Ferruccio Parri, a former Prime Minister of Italy, had stated that the establishment of missile bases was contrary to the interests of the countries of Europe and subjected them to great danger.

13. The Government of Spain should ponder the fact that the establishment of missile bases on its territory would subject Spain to the same danger of retaliation that faced other countries, such as West Germany and Italy.

14. The General Assembly should issue a warning to all mankind that the establishment of United States atomic bases abroad was aggravating the alarming world situation.

15. The Soviet Union had rightly urged that the question of cosmic space should be solved on the basis of strengthening universal security and eliminating threats against the Soviet Union and other peace-loving States, and to that end it had submitted its draft resolution (A/C.1/L.219). While the Soviet draft resolution took into account the proposals in the twenty-Power draft resolution, it was more far-reaching; it called for the elimination of foreign military bases on the territories of other countries, which was one of the prime prerequisites for the relaxation of international tension and the reduction of the danger of war. By urging close co-operation among all States within the framework of the United Nations, the Soviet draft resolution also pointed the way to the conclusion of agreements to put an end to the arms race.

16. Mr. WALKER (Australia) said it was an unhappy fact that, although the Committee was discussing the peaceful use of outer space, mankind's space activities might also be directed to other than peaceful purposes; indeed, the military possibilities opened by recent satellite and rocket experiments were terrifying. Those experiments had undoubtedly also greatly complicated the technical aspects of the problems of international security and disarmament and increased the importance of effective measures of control. But they had not changed the fundamental nature of the political problems involved and it would, in his delegation's view, be a serious error to insist that those difficult problems must be disposed of before meeting the need for an international approach to the problems of the peaceful use of outer space, for the latter question, potentially at least, reached much further than its bearing on the problems of security and disarmament. The progress of space technology had brought mankind to the threshold of a new era which would not only extend existing knowledge in many fields, but open entirely new areas of investigation.

17. Among the new problems which would require international consideration was that of how man's ven-

ture into space was to be organized. So far, two great nations had launched satellites, but if past history was a guide it would be only a matter of time before other countries followed their example. The technical difficulties and financial limitations which would hamper such ventures by countries acting individually would be a powerful stimulant to international co-operation to ensure that space research did not remain the preserve of two or three great Powers. International co-operation was also necessary because of the fact that geographical position on the face of the globe would be a highly important factor in the development of space research; if it were to be confined to the Northern Hemisphere, such research would labour under great disabilities. The need for international co-operation would become even more evident as soon as it became important to solve the problem of bringing space vehicles back to earth, for the co-operation of distant countries with extensive land areas might be needed to permit the tracking and guidance of the vehicles at an early stage of their descent. In any case, the possibilities of rapid advance in all aspects of space research would be greatly increased if ways were found to draw on the specialized contributions that could be made by various countries, small and large.

18. Australia, for example, had taken an active part in astronomical research, particularly radio-astronomy, and in the observation and tracking of the first man-made satellites. There was a variety of scientists in Australia with expert knowledge in the field of launching rocket vehicles and a good deal of experience with solid-fuel and liquid-fuel motors. The rocket range at Woomera was at present the only one in the Southern Hemisphere and possibly the most complete one in the world. Knowing the significance of their own specialized research, Australians were impressed by the great possibilities of international co-operation, and Australian scientists might be expected to contribute much to the planning of future work.

19. With regard to the form that such international co-operation should take, his delegation considered that it was premature to suggest the establishment of a special United Nations agency for the purpose until the problems likely to arise had been explored more fully. It did not wish to dismiss the Soviet suggestion for such an agency (A/C.1/L.219), but greatly preferred the approach envisaged in the twenty-Power draft resolution, co-sponsored by Australia, which provided for consideration, *inter alia*, of an aspect of the matter completely ignored in the Soviet draft resolution, that is, the legal problems likely to arise with regard to space. In the last resort, the choice between various possible legal arrangements for outer space was a political decision, and his delegation hoped it would be based on the principle that the use of outer space was the common concern of all mankind and should benefit mankind as a whole. But the choice must in any case be informed by a full understanding of the legal nature of various possible régimes and of their probable practical consequences. It was obvious, for example, that an extension to outer space of the established principle that the sovereignty of a State existed vertically above and below the surface of the earth would lead, because of the rotation and revolution of the earth and the movements of the galaxies, to absurdity. Nor did his delegation believe it would be politically acceptable in the modern world to regard the surface of any celestial bodies as being open to discovery and

occupation by the first comer. There were also objections to the idea that outer space, like the high seas, should be regarded as incapable of appropriation by any, but open to use by all. It seemed conceivable that the legal problems involved might be solved, not by the adoption of any general system in advance, but in a more piecemeal fashion.

20. In any case, the answers to such questions should be settled before individual States had been driven by events to improvise their own individual answers. They could, however, be settled only in the light of technical information, and the gathering of that information would be part of the work of the *ad hoc* committee proposed in the twenty-Power draft resolution.

21. His delegation considered that the proposed *ad hoc* committee should be made up of representatives of Governments—assisted as necessary by experts—drawn in part from countries which had already made substantial progress in space research or were well equipped to appreciate the emerging problems, and in part from other countries chosen to establish a reasonable geographic balance. While the committee should remain small at the initial stage, a slightly larger number than the nine proposed by the United States representative (983rd meeting) might have to be envisaged, in order to obtain a representative group. The committee's first task should be to obtain a general picture of what was being done in outer-space research and to make some assessment of promising lines of development. It should also, as the twenty-Power draft resolution provided, consider the activities and resources of the United Nations and other bodies, including the specialized agencies, which at present bore on the peaceful uses of outer space or could be directed towards assuring that activities in outer space would be developed in the interests of all mankind. It should then prepare proposals regarding the organizational arrangements to be made in order to promote further international co-operation. It should also, without losing itself in the study of specialized legal questions, consider the nature of the legal problems which might arise, as a guide to future action by the United Nations. In all its work, the committee would have the assistance of the Secretary-General, who should feel free also to submit concrete proposals for its consideration.

22. In commending the twenty-Power draft resolution to the Committee, he wished to stress that its approach was non-political, as befitted the subject. His delegation therefore hoped that it would be adopted enthusiastically by the Committee.

23. Mr. DE FREITAS VALLE (Brazil) said it gave his Government deep satisfaction that the question of the peaceful use of outer space was being considered at the present session. Although small and medium Powers

could not be expected to embark on expensive programmes for the exploration of space in the near future, developments in that field were unquestionably of the utmost importance for all States, large and small. It was for precisely those reasons that the United Nations seemed the proper forum in which to deal with the question.

24. It would, however, be self-deception not to recognize that efforts to conquer outer space were intimately connected with the development of military technology and that the two great Powers which had until now been alone in exploring outer space had done so within the framework of their military effort. There was, moreover, every indication that it would not be easy to dissociate future progress in the field from the strategic requirements of the great Powers.

25. The two draft resolutions before the Committee reflected the different approaches to the problem of the two Powers directly concerned with it. The Soviet draft resolution would make any agreement for the peaceful use of outer space dependent upon acceptance of a clause which could be considered only within the context of a comprehensive disarmament agreement and obviously fell within the purview of the Disarmament Commission. Moreover, the Soviet draft resolution made no mention at all of the far-reaching legal problems which might arise in connexion with the use of outer space. Some of the classical principles of international law regarding the sovereignty of States over the space above their territories had broken down as a result of the initiation of outer-space exploration; the United Nations now had an opportunity to construct a new set of regulations that would terminate the present *de facto* situation. The situation should not be allowed to get out of control. That was an area in which the small and medium-sized Powers were properly concerned and in which their voices should be heard.

26. The twenty-Power draft resolution which was the alternative proposal before the Committee included a reference, inserted at the suggestion of the representatives of Argentina and Brazil, both to the principle of the sovereign equality of States and the idea of equal opportunity to participate in the benefits of the peaceful exploration of cosmic space. His delegation considered that the establishment of an *ad hoc* committee to scrutinize the problems involved in the peaceful use of outer space was the right thing to do at present, for the question involved pioneer scientific, technological and legal studies which could not be the specific concern of a political body. His delegation hoped that a decision on the substance of the problem would be taken when the *ad hoc* committee had reported to the General Assembly at its fourteenth session.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THIRTEENTH SESSION

Official Records



Friday, 14 November 1958,  
at 10.50 a.m.

NEW YORK

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Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael URQUIA (El Salvador).

### AGENDA ITEM 60

Question of the peaceful use of outer space (A/3818 and Corr.1, A/3902, A/C.1/L.219, A/C.1/L.220) (continued):

- (a) The banning of the use of cosmic space for military purposes, the elimination of foreign military bases on the territories of other countries and international co-operation in the study of cosmic space;
- (b) Programme for international co-operation in the field of outer space

#### GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. AMADEO (Argentina) was glad that the question of outer space had been included in the Committee's agenda. In spite of the fact that very few countries were in a position to explore cosmic space, the question concerned the whole international community. Consideration of the question by the General Assembly was therefore timely. The difficulties raised by that question were so complex, however, that it seemed indispensable to establish a special body to study them and to propose solutions to the General Assembly at its fourteenth session. In the meantime, to adopt a position in advance would amount to prejudging that body's conclusions.
2. His delegation considered that it was necessary to make a clear distinction between the peaceful use of cosmic space and the question of disarmament, so as to separate political questions from matters of a technical, cultural or scientific nature. That was why it could not support the Soviet Union draft resolution (A/C.1/L.219), which again raised questions connected with disarmament.
3. It would, however, support the twenty-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.220), which dealt with the question of the peaceful use of outer space quite apart from current political tensions. From that point of view, the draft resolution was in keeping with the spirit of the International Geophysical Year, which provided an

example of the possibilities for co-operation in such matters between countries separated by deep ideological differences. The draft resolution consequently merited the support of all Members of the General Assembly and particularly those which by their unceasing efforts had made possible the present consideration of the question.

4. A tribute should certainly be paid to the countries which had taken the initiative in exploring outer space, but their privileged position could not in any circumstances prejudice the legitimate right of other States to use outer space. It followed that, without prejudging the legal status of outer space, the Assembly should affirm at once that all States had absolutely equal rights with regard to the use of outer space. He was grateful to the sponsors of the twenty-Power draft resolution—and particularly to the United States representative—for having, on the whole, taken into account the concern originally expressed by the representatives of Brazil and Argentina and shared by the delegations of other Latin-American countries.

5. His delegation agreed that the *ad hoc* committee proposed by the twenty Powers should not have too many members, but was of the opinion that that body should not be composed solely of the countries most advanced in astronautics; there should also be room in it for some countries representing those which were not yet in a position to explore outer space.

6. His delegation interpreted operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution not only as meaning that the committee would avail itself of the help of such experts and private organizations as it might wish to consult, but above all that it would be invited to seek the very useful collaboration of existing bodies.

7. His delegation considered that the "international centre for outer-space research and experiments" proposed by the Italian representative at the 982nd meeting would be a useful by-product of the General Assembly's discussions and that no better choice could be made for the headquarters of that body than the capital of Italy.

8. Mr. WEI (China) noted that, although the two new fields of exploration which science had penetrated, the atomic world and outer space, offered to some an opportunity to acquire new knowledge of great importance and to others the prospect of improving the life of mankind, they were full of promise and danger for every man and nation of the world. Only effective international co-operation could save the human race from annihilation and enable it to enjoy the fruits of science.

9. Since the creation of the United Nations, the danger of atomic weapons had grown steadily, in spite of the General Assembly's resolutions and the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency in pursuance of the programme called "Atoms for peace", and as had