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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF
OUTER SPACE

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

Forty-first session

Vienna, 16-27 February 2004

Agenda item 6

**Implementation of the recommendations of
the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration
and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III)**

Interim Report of the Action Team on Near-Earth Objects

The present document contains the final report submitted by the Action Team on Near Earth Objects (recommendation no. 14 of UNISPACE III) for consideration by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its forty-first session.

Interim Report of the Action Team on Near-Earth Objects

The Action Team has taken the opportunity of its meeting during the Scientific and Technical in 2004 to make a brief report on some of the many NEO activities that have been progressed since the last report to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 2003 on the work of Action Team 14.

Valued and active support to the Action Team (AT) objectives has been received from all intergovernmental and non-governmental international organisations associated with the AT 14. Five of the seven were present at the OECD Global Science Forum (GSF) workshop held in Frascati, Italy, in 2003. In addition representatives of ten of the fourteen countries, members of the AT, have attended AT meetings or related events, including the OECD workshop and presentations on NEOs at the IAC in Bremen. The AT took the opportunity of its first meeting in 2004 to update its contact details.

In September 2003 the Report of the NASA NEO Science Definition Team “Study to Determine the Feasibility of Extending the Search for NEOs to Smaller Limiting Diameters”, was published on the www. The report represents significant progress in the understanding of the issues involved and also addresses the study objective based on a cost benefit analysis.

A copy of the report and its recommendations can be found at:
<http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/neo/neoreport030825.pdf>

Introductory text and background can be found at –
<http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/neo/report.html>

NASA has continued with its wide range of NEO related activities covering survey, follow-up and study of NEOs. In particular the NASA Stardust spacecraft has successfully performed a flyby of asteroid Annefrank in preparation for its encounter with Comet Wild 2. These activities and links to activities worldwide can be found on the NASA JPL web site.

In June 2003 the report of the OECD GSF workshop on NEOs, Risks, Policies and Actions was presented to the GSF. The workshop brought together the scientific groups studying NEOs and members of the civil contingencies and civil emergencies organisations responsible for dealing with the broadest range of risks to society. The case was made, and accepted, that NEOs, like earthquakes and volcanoes, are a risk that these groups should consider. This event thus gave the NEO researchers an introduction to the potential users of their data i.e. those interested in impact probability assessments. This new understanding will help to focus and direct the interdisciplinary research needed to support the translation of observations, expressed in astronomical terms (such as albedo), into meaningful categories of risk e.g. an object is likely to cause a tsunami with specified characteristics – which is thus relevant to countries x, y and z.

Over the next year the action team will help prepare for the implementation of its proposed agenda item on NEOs planned for 2005 – 2007. The detail of the agenda item has been developed during the 2004 S&T with the help of AT members and other members of the Subcommittee. Work on the agenda item could start with presentations from the AT and the range of international organisations involved in the area. In particular it would be an opportunity to hear the results of the latest OECD and ICSU activity which aims to be completed and discussed by the end of 2004. Later years would consider any further major initiatives and

request inputs from members on their NEO activities and plans. When the information on the range of world wide activities is available to the committee it may be appropriate to set up a working group to take the matter forward or to return the consideration to the AT following an updating of its terms of reference. A draft work plan has been circulated for comment that will allow a discussion in years two and three of the work plan on how to proceed with NEO activities in the longer term.