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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF
OUTER SPACE

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

Forty-third session

Vienna, 20 February - 3 March 2006

Agenda item 6

Implementation of the
recommendations of UNISPACE III

Promoting greater participation of young people in space science and engineering

At the forty-second session of the Scientific and Technical the Working of the Whole noted that a number of initiatives were being undertaken to promote greater participation of young people in the areas of space science and engineering and invited member States, and in particular permanent observers of the Committee, to report to the Working Group of the Whole during the forty-third session of the Subcommittee on their activities relating to the promotion of space science and engineering among young people.

The annex to this document contains the report received from the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR).

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Annex

Promoting greater participation of young people in space science and engineering

I. COMMITTEE ON SPACE RESEARCH (COSPAR)

Initiatives to promote greater participation of young people in the area of space science

1. Currently measures are being taken to make COSPAR Scientific Assemblies events where the participation of young persons is actively encouraged. Presentation and discussion of scientific results at the Assembly is in itself an educational activity for all participants, and especially so for young, less experienced researchers. The Committee's efforts extend, of course, to promoting the participation of more students and young scientists through a special, low registration fee. However, COSPAR's actions in related matters also extend further, and a short list of efforts currently underway and/or planned for the 2006 Assembly includes the following initiatives.
2. COSPAR has recently created a Panel on Capacity Building (PCB) which will organize a session at the Scientific Assembly entitled "Opportunities for Capacity Building Associated with the International Heliophysical Year (IHY)". Members of the PCB, which organizes one or two courses per year in developing countries, will also meet at the Assembly to plan future activities. In brief, the objectives of COSPAR's capacity building activities are to enhance the scientific capability of developing countries by increasing knowledge and use of public archives of space data in order both to broaden the scope of research programs in developing countries and also to ensure that scientists in them are aware of the full range of facilities which are available to them and which are also used by scientists in the developed countries. This is done by providing highly-practical instruction in the use of these archives and the associated publicly-available software so that participants, for the most part young scientists, on returning home can readily incorporate these tools usefully into their research programs.
3. Fostering personal links between young participants attending the workshops and experienced scientists serving as tutors, in order to contribute to reducing the isolation often experienced by scientists in developing countries, is also an important aspect for achieving the aims of the capacity building program. Five capacity building workshops have already been held with four more in the planning stages.
4. In the framework of an agreement concluded in March 2005 between COSPAR and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Office will participate in the selection of topics and sites for future workshops. The Office will therefore have a voice in determining COSPAR policy and thus ensuring that the priorities of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) are represented.
5. Two core events will be organized at the Assembly in order to help space scientists promote education programs aimed at the young. These events are entitled, "Space Science Education (Programs, Styles, Strategies, Practice)" and "Space and Earth Science Education and Outreach."
6. In the framework of the agreement mentioned above, COSPAR is in favour of the Office taking or sharing responsibility for at least one event at future Scientific Assemblies. This measure would ensure that the Office objectives, including promotion of space science to young people, are given priority consideration when constructing future Assembly programs.
7. COSPAR has committed itself to devote 50% of funds available for participant support to assist scientists and students under the age of 35 who, without assistance, would be unable to participate in the Scientific Assembly. Much of the funds available for support come from

outside sponsors (scientific NGOs, space agencies, national foundations, etc.), but a generous portion is also provided directly from COSPAR's budget.

8. COSPAR is negotiating with the European Space Agency to institutionalize a program in which various space agencies would fund and oversee the participation of a number of students at each Assembly. Depending on how the program develops, these students may be significantly younger, on average, than the post-doc level researchers who tended to make up the category of participant with the lowest age level at past COSPAR Assemblies.

9. COSPAR, which already confers the prestigious Zeldovich Medal, sponsored by the Russian Academy of Sciences, on scientists under the age of 36, is currently considering the creation of two new awards, both of which would probably be for students and scientists under the age of 30. The first would be presented for the best presentation and the second for best publication resulting from an Assembly presentation. The development of these awards is meant to encourage young scientists to participate more actively in the Assembly and to create new possibilities for interaction with experienced researchers who will be viewing, discussing, and judging the work of candidates.

10. COSPAR will consider, and is likely to adopt, a proposal to create at the Assembly a new Panel on Education to oversee and broaden the Committee's activities to promote space research in school and university education.