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## Committee on the Peaceful

### Uses of Outer Space

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

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

## Draft report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III)

### I. Introduction

1. The Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) was convened at the threshold of a new millennium, one that presented significant opportunities for human development through advancement in space science and technology. However, the global community was also faced with unprecedented challenges to its goal of sustainable development. The States that participated in UNISPACE III resolved to strengthen cooperation to help meet those challenges and to maximize opportunities for human development through the use of space science and technology and their applications.

2. UNISPACE III addressed a broad range of subjects related to maximizing the benefits of space activities to meet the needs of people, particularly in developing countries, and to promote sustainable development to enhance the human condition in all countries. The States participating in UNISPACE III unanimously adopted a resolution entitled “The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development”,<sup>1</sup> which contained the nucleus of a strategy to address global challenges in the future.

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\* A/AC.105/C.1/L.270.



3. In its resolution 54/68 of December 1999, the General Assembly took note with satisfaction of the report of UNISPACE III and endorsed the Vienna Declaration. The Assembly recognized the contributions made by civil society, including non-governmental entities and young generation, to the success of UNISPACE III. UNISPACE III marked a turning point for the United Nations in building a partnership with civil society to advance its objectives in the peaceful uses of outer space.

#### **A. Background to UNISPACE III**

4. The United Nations accorded importance to the promotion of international collaboration in space activities from as early as the beginning of the space age, which was marked by the successful launch of Sputnik I in 1957. The General Assembly established the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 1959.

5. The Committee, with its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee, has served as a focal point for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. The Committee and its Legal Subcommittee have played a pivotal role in the development and adoption by the United Nations of the five outer space treaties and the five sets of legal principles and declarations, establishing the international legal regime governing outer space activities.

6. The Committee has also played the key role in the organization of the United Nations global conferences on outer space. Many initiatives resulted from the United Nations conferences on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, which were held in 1968 and 1982. One of the most important outcomes was the creation and expansion of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.<sup>2</sup> Under the responsibility of the United Nations Expert on Space Applications, the Programme has carried out a wide range of activities to strengthen capacity, particularly of developing countries, to use and benefit from space science and technology and their applications.

7. One of the major accomplishments of the Programme, following the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), was the establishment of regional centres for space science and technology education. The Expert on Space Applications made a proposal to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 1989 that the United Nations should lead an international effort to establish regional centres based on existing national or regional educational institutions in developing countries.<sup>3</sup> That idea, which was noted by the Committee in 1990,<sup>4</sup> addressed many elements introduced under the expanded mandate of the Programme for the development of indigenous capacity of developing countries in space applications. Subsequently, by its resolution 45/72 of 11 December 1990, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation that the United Nations should support the creation of regional centres for space science and technology education in existing national/regional educational institutions in the developing countries. International efforts led by the Programme resulted in the inauguration of the regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, in India in 1995, followed by the regional centres inaugurated in 1998 in Morocco, for French-speaking countries in Africa, and in Nigeria, for English-speaking countries in Africa.

8. In the years that followed UNISPACE 82, applications and use of space technology forged rapidly ahead, with new technologies and techniques spawning both greater use and increased effectiveness of existing applications and creating new ones. The number of countries with space capabilities and countries that used space technology increased. There have also been major advances in space-based observations of the Earth's atmosphere, oceans, surface and biosphere. Space science and technology, together with advances in information technology, have had a profound impact on the day-to-day life of people. Satellite communications have resulted in greater global interdependence and brought distant parts of the world closer together. In addition to services in the field of transportation, new applications of global navigation satellite systems have emerged in such areas as surveying and mapping, Earth sciences, agriculture, environmental monitoring, disaster management, telecommunications and precision timing. The public sector has begun to establish partnerships with the private sector in various phases of research and development. Commercialization of certain space applications has increased. Significant changes in the geopolitical context, with the world generally engaging in cooperation rather than confrontation, have affected a whole range of relationships between States, increasing the possibility for many more cooperative and collaborative projects in outer space activities.

9. The efforts made by the Committee to take advantage of emerging opportunities for greater cooperation in space activities led to the adoption by the General Assembly in 1996 of the Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries.<sup>5</sup> The Declaration stresses that States are free to determine all aspects of their participation in international cooperation in space activities, to be carried out on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis, the need to pay particular attention to the benefit and the interests of developing countries and the necessity to conduct cooperation in the modes that are considered most effective and appropriate. The Declaration also recognizes commercial space activities as a mode for international cooperation on an equal basis with activities by Governments.

10. At the same time, the Committee has recognized the increasing challenges faced by humanity. Rapid population growth, resulting in the expansion of human activities, in particular industrial activities, and in increasing demands to meet the basic needs of people, continues to have an adverse impact on the condition of the planet Earth. Consequences include land and coastal degradation, air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, deforestation and degradation of living conditions. Many people, in particular in developing countries where lives depend on natural resources, are caught in a vicious circle of environmental degradation and poverty. Globally, the health of more than a billion people is affected each year by infectious diseases, some of which are sensitive to weather variability and global climate change. Hundreds of natural disasters have affected populations in many countries around the world every year, causing billions of dollars worth of damage. Their impact on the developing countries has been particularly severe. In some instances, disasters have destroyed in a matter of minutes all the progress that a developing country made in social and economic development over a period of years. While the revolution in information and communication technologies has led to many positive effects, the international community has become increasingly concerned that it could lead to widening the gap between those who use the technologies and those

who do not. These challenges were addressed in the series of United Nations global conferences held in the 1990s, which repeatedly stressed the importance of sustainable development of all humanity.

11. The Committee has recognized that improved space capabilities and increasing opportunities for international cooperation could assist humanity in dealing with those challenges. This led to the decision taken by the General Assembly in 1997 to convene UNISPACE III, under the theme “Space Benefits for Humanity in the Twenty-first Century”, to address the challenges being faced by humanity and to take advantage of new opportunities through international cooperation in space activities.

12. To some extent, the convening of UNISPACE III was a turning point in shifting the attention of those promoting space activities towards meeting the basic needs of people and linking the benefits of space activities to sustainable economic, social and cultural development. Accordingly, the primary objectives of UNISPACE III were:

(a) To promote effective means of using space solutions to address problems of regional or global significance;

(b) To strengthen the capabilities of Member States, especially developing countries, to use the results of space research for economic and cultural development;

(c) To enhance international cooperation in space science and technology and its applications.

13. In the preparations for UNISPACE III, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee acted respectively as the Preparatory Committee and the Advisory Committee. The regional preparatory conferences, held in Kuala Lumpur from 18 to 22 May 1998 for Asia and the Pacific; in Rabat from 26 to 30 October 1998 for Africa and Western Asia; in Concepción, Chile, from 12 to 16 October 1998 for Latin America and the Caribbean; and in Bucharest from 25 to 29 January 1999 for Eastern Europe, also played an important role. Organized within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, the regional conferences provided opportunities to States that were not members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to become aware of the objectives to be pursued and issues to be discussed at UNISPACE III. More importantly, the regional conferences served to consolidate regional inputs to be reflected in the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, which serves the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, acted as the executive secretariat of UNISPACE III.

## **B. Unique organizational aspects of UNISPACE III**

14. In the preparations for UNISPACE III, member States of the Committee stressed that the Conference should yield concrete results and that realistic and feasible follow-up activities should be planned to implement recommendations arising out of the Conference. To that end, it was agreed that the recommendations should be sharply focused and limited in number, while indicating well-defined goals that could be achieved within a short period of time.

15. The agenda of UNISPACE III covered a wide range of thematic areas where space science and technology and their applications could contribute to promoting sustainable development and enhancing the human condition. UNISPACE III addressed scientific knowledge of the Earth and its environment and the practical applications of space science and technology, while stressing the importance of education and training, of promoting economic and societal benefits, including commercial benefits, and of furthering international cooperation, including the review of the status of international space law.

16. The General Assembly encouraged intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as space-related industries, to contribute actively to achieving the objectives of UNISPACE III. Young professionals and university students were also invited to organize an activity to provide inputs for the Conference. In view of the importance placed by the Committee on the need for further coordination in their space-related activities, entities of the United Nations system were also encouraged to contribute actively to UNISPACE III.

17. Space agencies, entities of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in space-related activities contributed to achieving the objectives of UNISPACE III by addressing various technical issues and policy matters and making recommendations to the main committees through the Technical Forum, which was one of the main bodies of UNISPACE III. The Technical Forum held some 40 workshops, seminars, round-table meetings, special sessions and discussion panels. Its activities included the Space Generation Forum, a global forum organized for and by young professionals and university students interested in space activities. The Space Generation Forum provided opportunities for young professionals around the world to present their visions and perspectives for future space endeavours and proved a very successful activity of UNISPACE III (see A/CONF.184/L.8 and Corr.1, A/CONF.184/L.14 and A/CONF.184/C.1/L.11 and Corr.1 for reports of the Forum). The Technical Forum was open to all UNISPACE III participants and offered a unique opportunity for government representatives, industry managers, researchers and university students freely to exchange ideas and views. Results and proposals of the workshops and seminars were forwarded through the chairman of the Technical Forum to the main committees for possible inclusion in the report of UNISPACE III.

18. UNISPACE III was convened as a special session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, open to all Member States. Organizing costs were kept to a minimum and no separate conference budget was requested. In the years preceding UNISPACE III, cost-saving measures were introduced by the Committee, including shortening of some of the annual sessions of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies and utilization of unedited verbatim transcripts in lieu of verbatim and summary records. Austria, as the host country, made a significant contribution by covering the costs for meeting facilities and services. The capacity of the executive secretariat was also augmented by volunteer interns and by cash and in-kind voluntary contributions from member States and space-related international organizations and industries.

### **C. Results of UNISPACE III**

19. UNISPACE III was attended by more than 2,500 participants, including representatives of 100 States and 30 international organizations and representatives from the private sector.

20. The most important result of UNISPACE III was the adoption of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development. In that Declaration, UNISPACE III recommended 33 specific actions that should be taken by the international community to meet the global challenges in protecting the Earth's environment and managing its resources, using space applications for human security, development and welfare, advancing scientific knowledge of space and protecting the space environment, enhancing education and training opportunities and ensuring public awareness of the importance of space activities, strengthening and repositioning space activities in the United Nations system and promoting international cooperation. This achievement was a product of collective wisdom of people from around the world who shared the dream of making space benefits available to all people. It was also a result of the commitment made by countries around the world to making that dream come true.

21. In the Vienna Declaration, UNISPACE III also invited the General Assembly to declare the period 4 to 10 October each year as World Space Week, in order to celebrate at the international level each year the contributions that space science and technology can make to the betterment of the human condition.

22. In its resolution 54/68, the General Assembly endorsed the Vienna Declaration as adopted by UNISPACE III. In the same resolution, the Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the successful preparation of UNISPACE III and commended the efforts of the Preparatory Committee, the Advisory Committee and the executive secretariat to organize UNISPACE III within existing resources. The Assembly also recognized the contributions of the Technical Forum and the Space Generation Forum to UNISPACE III. The Assembly urged Governments, and organs, organizations and programmes within the United Nations system, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and industries engaged in space-related activities, to take the action necessary for the effective implementation of the Vienna Declaration. The Assembly also agreed that it would appraise and review, at its session in 2004, the implementation of the outcome of UNISPACE III and to consider further actions and initiatives.

## **II. Mechanisms for implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III**

23. As early as 1999, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space considered and agreed upon a measure to reflect the outcome of UNISPACE III in the future work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. The Committee recommended that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee reconvene its Working Group of the Whole to assist the Subcommittee in considering its future work in the light of recommendations of UNISPACE III. The Committee also took an important step to facilitate consideration by its subcommittees of new issues following the outcome of UNISPACE III, adopting a revised structure of the

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agendas of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee.<sup>6</sup>

#### **A. Revised structure of the agendas of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee**

24. At its session in 1999, immediately preceding UNISPACE III, the Committee revised the structure of the agendas of its subcommittees. The revised structure has enabled the subcommittees to introduce new agenda items either under multi-year work plans with objectives to be achieved within a fixed time period or as single issues or items for discussion, to be considered for one session only.

25. At its session following UNISPACE III, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee agreed that the revised structure of its agenda would facilitate the consideration of those issues of global concern and the implementation of the corresponding elements of the strategy referred to in the Vienna Declaration which were relevant to the work of the Subcommittee (see A/AC.105/736, annex II, para. 8). The Subcommittee endorsed the recommendation of its Working Group of the Whole that the Subcommittee should consider the items contained in the nucleus of the strategy to address global challenges as reflected in the Vienna Declaration through multi-year work plans. The intention behind the recommendation was to ensure that the action associated with each of the items would be taken and to coordinate international efforts in the relevant areas.

#### **B. Plan of action of the Office for Outer Space Affairs**

26. In its resolution 54/68, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to recommend measures to ensure that the Office for Outer Space Affairs was provided with adequate resources to implement the actions listed in paragraph 13 of that resolution, in particular 13 activities to be included in the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, based on the recommendations of UNISPACE III. In response to that request, the Office prepared its plan of action to implement recommendations of UNISPACE III and submitted its plan to the Committee in 2000 (see A/AC.105/L.224).

27. The plan of action submitted by the Office consisted of measures to implement recommendations of UNISPACE III in the following areas: (a) strengthening the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subcommittees in promoting international cooperation in the use of outer space; (b) initiating a capacity-building programme in areas relating to space law; (c) strengthening the activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications by increasing synergy among the major components of the Programme, such as the organization of workshops and training courses, provision of technical advisory services and administration of long-term fellowship programmes; (d) promoting the use of space technologies within the United Nations system; (e) establishing and strengthening partnership with industry; (f) strengthening partnership with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations; (g) initiating a public outreach programme and a programme for young people; and (h) strengthening publication and information

services. The Committee, at its 2000 session, endorsed the plan of action proposed by the Office and recommended its implementation.

28. Some of the measures proposed in the plan of action had not been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolutions 54/249 and 54/250 of 23 December 1999. In its resolution 55/122 of 8 December 2000, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to begin implementing those measures and activities which were contained in the plan of action and which were within the programme of work of the Office for Outer Space Affairs for the biennium 2000-2001. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure the full implementation of the plan with the necessary resources in 2002. Subsequently, all the measures contained in the plan of action were included in the programme of work of the Office for the biennium 2002-2003 (see A/56/6 (Sect. 6)).

### **C. Establishment of action teams**

29. In 2001, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee agreed that recommendations of UNISPACE III could be assessed and implemented through voluntary leadership by individual Member States and their appropriate governmental institutions in relation to specific actions listed in the Vienna Declaration. The Subcommittee also agreed that the leaders would conduct discussions within their teams to seek the broadest possible participation of non-governmental entities. Noting that 33 actions were recommended in the Vienna Declaration as elements of a strategy to address global challenges in the future, the Subcommittee agreed to conduct a survey among Member States to identify their level of interest and priority for each action. Through the survey, each Member State was invited to indicate whether it wished to be the leader or a member of the team to carry out the recommended action. Each Member State was also invited to identify non-governmental entities that wished to be members of the team. The Office for Outer Space Affairs compiled the results of the survey for consideration by the Committee at its session in 2001.

30. On the basis of the results of the survey, the Committee established 11 action teams to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III that had been accorded highest priority by Member States or for which there had been an offer by a Member State to lead associated activities. The Committee identified the recommendations based on the results of the survey conducted among Member States. The issues addressed by the 11 action teams related to: (a) environmental monitoring strategies; (b) management of natural resources; (c) weather and climate forecasting; (d) public health; (e) disaster management; (f) global navigation satellite systems; (g) sustainable development; (h) near-Earth objects; (i) capacity-building; (j) increasing awareness; and (k) innovative funding sources. As requested by the Committee, the Office for Outer Space Affairs had also conducted a survey among the entities of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations with observer status in the Committee to identify the recommendations for which they wished to be members of the action teams. At its session in 2003, the Committee established an action team to implement the recommendation relating to knowledge-sharing through the promotion of universal access to space-based communication services. Annex [...] to the present report



contains a list of action teams established by the Committee and information on the participation of Member States and organizations in action teams. [By the end of 2003,] 51 countries, 15 entities of the United Nations system, 10 international organizations that have observer status with the Committee and 13 other intergovernmental and non-governmental entities had participated as members in one or more action teams.

31. As requested by the Committee, all the action teams reported in 2002 to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the objectives, work plans and final products to be delivered. The action teams also reported to the Committee on further developments in their work. All the action teams were requested to report further on the progress made in their work to the Committee and the Subcommittee at their annual sessions. Most of the action teams met in the margins of the annual sessions of the Committee and the Subcommittee, taking advantage of the presence of the many members who attended the sessions. Some of them convened meetings during the intersessional period to advance their work. Much of the work of the action teams was carried out through electronic correspondence.

32. The revised structure of the agendas of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee (see paragraphs 24 and 25 above) has enabled those bodies to provide policy guidelines to the action teams to implement recommendations of UNISPACE III. The action teams complemented the work conducted by the subsidiary bodies on the agenda items relating to the global challenges set forth in the Vienna Declaration.

#### **D. National efforts**

33. In examining the proposals on the mechanism to implement recommendations of UNISPACE III in 2001, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee took into account the pivotal role of Governments. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space noted that some Governments were implementing various recommendations of UNISPACE III through the adoption of national space policies.<sup>7</sup> In 2003, the Committee also recalled that the responsibility to implement the recommendations rested with member States, the Office for Outer Space Affairs under the guidance of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, intergovernmental organizations for multilateral cooperation and other entities engaged in space-related activities.

34. Governments of Member States continue to play an essential role in ensuring the successful implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. Member States have contributed to the work of the Committee and its subcommittees at their annual sessions and to the work of the action teams. Some member States have also supported activities of the Office for Outer Space Affairs aimed at implementing recommendations of UNISPACE III, within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. In addition, member States have taken action at the national level to implement some of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The list of documentation on action by member States, as received by the Secretariat, is contained in annex [...] to the present report.

## E. Other mechanisms

35. In response to a call by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/68, some intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations have taken initiatives to implement recommendations of UNISPACE III. Some organizations have convened international conferences to examine the recommendations of UNISPACE III and to identify possible follow-up action that they could take within their mandate. Further information on the activities of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as follow-up to UNISPACE III is contained in paragraphs [...]. The list of documentation on mechanisms implemented by various intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and their efforts, as received by the Secretariat, is contained in annex [...] to the present report.

36. Some other organizations have also made efforts to launch initiatives by establishing a new mechanism for implementation. In 2000, the Committee was briefed on an initiative taken under the auspices of the International Astronautical Federation to engage non-governmental entities in the implementation of selected recommendations resulting from UNISPACE III under the theme "Priorities for space activities in the twenty-first century".

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See *Report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 19-30 July 1999* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.I.3), chap. I, resolution 1.

<sup>2</sup> UNISPACE 82 expanded the mandate of the Programme to include, in particular, the following elements: (a) promotion of greater exchange of actual experiences with specific applications; (b) promotion of greater cooperation in space science and technology between developed and developing countries and among developing countries; (c) development of a fellowship programme for in-depth training of space technologists and applications specialists; (d) organization of seminars on advanced space applications and new system developments for managers and leaders of space application and technology development activities as well as seminars for users in specific applications; (e) stimulation of the growth of indigenous nuclei and an autonomous technological base, with the cooperation of other United Nations organizations and/or States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies; (f) dissemination of information on new and advanced technology and applications; (g) provision or arrangements for provision of technical advisory services on space applications projects, upon request by Member States or any of the specialized agencies.

<sup>3</sup> See A/AC.105/446, paras. 33-37.

<sup>4</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/45/20)*, para. 48.

<sup>5</sup> General Assembly resolution 51/122, annex.

<sup>6</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20 and corrigendum (A/54/20 and Corr.1)*, annex I.

<sup>7</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/57/20)*, para. 47.