

19 June 2013

English only

**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space**
Fifty-sixth session
Vienna, 12-21 June 2013
Other matters

**Proposal by Greece on the organization and methods of
work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
and its Subcommittees**

The first (and last) post-Cold War re-organization of the working methods of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space as it had been proposed by Greece and supported by many other member States, was adopted during the thirty-ninth session of the Committee, in 1996.

In the light of the practical experiences gained from the application of that new organization scheme all along these last 17 years, as well as the major economic crisis that, since already five years, hits even the most wealthy States of the world, have already made it necessary and urgent the improvement of the existing operation model of the Committee.

Therefore, Greece, continuing its active and constructive contribution, for over 30 years, to the noble objectives of the Committee and its two Subcommittees, and in response to these vital organizational needs, proposes the urgent adoption of the following measures.

Finally, it should be reminded that, during the last fifty-second session of the Legal Subcommittee and the current fifty-sixth session of the Committee, the representatives of France and Germany have made concrete and systematic proposals on the re-organization of the working methods of the Committee very close to those of Greece. Thus, at least at the European level, it is an almost identical common position of three Committee Member States concerning the need of rationalizing the functioning of the Committee. And this is particularly important, since to this initiative participate two major spacefaring nations of the world.



1. COPUOS membership enlargement

All United Nations member States are, in principle, welcomed to full membership of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, because by their direct and energetic participation to its activities, could much better contribute to the universalization of space law and the strengthening of international peace and security. However, as the Committee is a restricted (non-open-ended) subsidiary United Nations body, the relevant General Assembly resolution 56/51/10.12.2001 (§ 41) shall be fully applied and respected in order to avoid any undesirable overcrowding, which could inevitably leads to the blockage of the normal functioning of the Committee within the limited time frame of its sessions. The same is obviously valid as regards the participation to the Committee with observer status of any other interested state and international intergovernmental organization. In that connection, it should be emphasized that any State wishing to become a full member of the Committee shall be contracting party at least to the Outer Space Treaty or, in any case, provide assurances that it would accede to the space treaties the soonest feasible.

The only problem with the non-State entities (civil law associations, foundations, institutions, etc.) granted with observer status, except for the reputable international scientific societies, is that related to their representativeness as exponents of broader layers of civil society and the public opinion, in general, at the global, regional and even national levels.

2. Sessions of the Committee and its two Subcommittees

In the last 15 years, at least, the substantial work of the three bodies is dramatically reduced and the majority of their meetings, except for those devoted to the composition of the recommendations on the space debris mitigation and the use of nuclear power sources into cosmic space, are consumed for almost routine and meaningless repetitive discussions. In addition, more than the half of the total time dedicated to the meetings of each session of each body, including the corresponding costs for the conference facilities and the interpretation in the six United Nations official languages, is used extensively and more or less abusively, for the almost promotional (advertising) technical presentations of not only the member States, but also the non-State observers at the expenses of the United Nations.

In view of the foregoing and the serious economic problems faced by all States and the United Nations, too, it is now imperative to reduce the length of the annual sessions of the Committee and its two Subcommittees in just five (5) working days of the same week, in order to avoid the living costs for a pointless staying in Vienna for a weekend at the expenses of taxpayers.

Equally, to rationalize the time partition for the works of the three bodies, it is necessary to reconsider their agendas and merge or even delete all overlapping or useless items. Also, it is indispensable to reduce the time of statements of the national delegations of full member States to maximum fifteen (15) minutes for their general statements and to five (5) minutes for all other interventions on any specific agenda items. Concerning all other participants (State and non-State observers), the time of their general statements shall be reduced to five (5) minutes. The Member States and observer States and intergovernmental organizations could distribute to the participants their activity reports or other information documents in

printed or electronic form at their expenses. The Committee Secretariat shall reproduce and distribute in printed form as official documents only the proposals of full member States and the annual reports of the three bodies. Besides, as the use of electronic means of working is generalized, all preparatory works within the Committee and the two Subcommittees shall be carried out via these means, making, thus, economic and ecological savings from the significant reduction of the printed materials. As for the technical presentations, in order to preserve the continuity of the work programme and make significant cost reductions, they shall be made only following to the end of the afternoon meeting of each working day, without interpretation and until the closing of the UNOV premises. These presentations shall not exceed the fifteen (15) minutes each.

Finally, in view of the need of constant interaction between the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee, it should be studied the practical issues for parallel (simultaneous) annual sessions of both, exactly to be possible to have joint meetings.

3. Composition of the Bureaux

The term of office of the officers of the three Bureaux shall be reduced in one year in order to give to all full member States of each geopolitical region the opportunity to exercise these par excellence honorific functions much more often. For that purpose, the three Bureaux shall be composed of three (3) officers, namely the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, and the Rapporteur. This means that each year instead of five nine regions and subregions will be represented, and, thus, it would be at least diminished if not excluded any kind of competition between candidates of the same geopolitical area.

Besides, the qualitative criteria for the appointment to these posts shall be strictly observed and applied without exception for any political reasons. In particular, it shall be fully and without derogations respected, the customary rule established, in 1958, by the gentlemen agreement between the permanent member States of the United Nations Security Council not to assume the duties of officer of the Bureaux. Of course, this rule was for the first time breached in 2006. In addition, it shall be absolutely respected the long traditional rule to entrusting the duties of the Chairmen of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee to distinguished experts of the corresponding clades, namely specialists in space science and technology applications and jurists specialized in international space law, respectively. It is noteworthy that thanks to this rule, the Committee and the two Subcommittees were chaired from the very beginning by internationally renowned technical and legal professionals. In addition, it should be emphasized that, in order to maintain the purely inter-State character of the Committee, the officers of the Bureaux must be only governmental officials of the full Member States and absolutely not functionaries and/or employees of any observers (States, international organizations, or other non-State entities).

Greece firmly believes that the adoption of these proposed measures can contribute decisively to upgrading the functioning of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the significant increase in its efficiency for the benefit of all humanity.