



**Office for Outer Space Affairs**  
United Nations Office at Vienna



# **UNCOPUOS, its decision making process, and the role of OOSA**

**Presentation at the ECSL Summer Course on  
Space Law and Policy  
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## **Part A:**

### **Brief overview of the work of COPUOS and its Secretariat**





## COPUOS and OOSA: Short historical background

- ◆ **1958: UN General Assembly (GA) establishes an ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (18 Members)**
- ◆ **1959: GA confirms Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) as a permanent body (24 members)**
- ◆ **1961: Two Subcommittees established (Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee)**
- ◆ **1962: Unit established within the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs. Transformed into the Outer Space Affairs Division of that Department in 1968, and transformed in 1992 into the Office for Outer Space Affairs, which moved to Vienna in 1993**
- ◆ **Three UNISPACE Conferences held in 1968, 1982 and 1999**





## Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)

- ◆ **Only Committee of the General Assembly that deals exclusively with international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space**
- ◆ **Principle functions include reviewing international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, devising programmes in this field to be undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations, encouraging continued research and dissemination of information on outer space matters, and studying legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space**





## **Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)**

- ◆ **Two standing subcommittees: Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) and Legal Subcommittee (LSC)**
- ◆ **COPUOS and its subcommittees meet annually**
- ◆ **67 Member States and 20 organizations with permanent observer status**
- ◆ **COPUOS reports annually to Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, which annually adopts a GA resolution on “International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space” (see GA resolution 60/99 of 8 December 2005)**





## **United Nations programme on the peaceful uses of outer space**

**Proposed strategic framework for the period 2008-2009  
(A/61/6 (Prog.5))**

### **Objective:**

- ◆ **To increase international cooperation among Member States and international entities in the conduct of space activities for peaceful purposes and the use of space science and technology and their applications towards achieving internationally agreed sustainable development goals**

### **Accomplishments:**

- ◆ **Greater understanding, acceptance and implementation of the United Nations Space Law treaties**
- ◆ **Strengthened capacities of countries in using space applications**
- ◆ **Increased coherence and synergy in space-related work of United Nations entities and international space-related entities**





## United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

- ◆ **Organization of the Office for Outer Space Affairs:**
  - ◆ Office of the Director
  - ◆ Committee Services and Research Section (CSRS)
  - ◆ Space Applications Section (SAS)
  
- ◆ **Legislative bodies:**
  - ◆ Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
  - ◆ General Assembly (Special Political & Decolonization Committee/Fourth Committee)
  
- ◆ **Staff of the Office for Outer Space Affairs**
  - ◆ 20 staff members from the following countries: Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, Nigeria, Oman, Philippines, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, Ukraine, United States and Uzbekistan
  - ◆ Currently 2 Associate Experts (Italy and Republic of Korea)







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## United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

**Director: Sergio Camacho (Mexico)**

- ◆ **Goals of the Office:**
  - ◆ To implement the decisions of the General Assembly and COPUOS
  - ◆ To promote international cooperation in the use of space technology for sustainable economic and social development and for the protection and management of the Earth's environment
  - ◆ To assist in the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework governing space activities
  - ◆ To strengthen the capacity of developing countries to use space technology
  - ◆ To provide technical information and advice to Member States, international organizations and other United Nations entities
  - ◆ To monitor legal, scientific and technical developments relating to space activities, technology and applications
  - ◆ To build capacity in space law (became a priority following UNISPACE III in 1999)





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## United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

### Committee Services and Research Section

**Chief: Niklas Hedman (Sweden)**

- ◆ Provides substantive secretariat services to COPUOS, its Subcommittees, Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities and the 4<sup>th</sup> Committee of the General Assembly on the item dealing with international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space
- ◆ Prepares scientific and legal studies for the inter-governmental bodies
- ◆ Prepares background and policy reports for consideration by the Committee and its Subcommittees
- ◆ Maintains, on behalf of the Secretary-General, a UN Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space and searchable Index to the Register, available on Internet
- ◆ Maintains the International Space Information Service which has been established at the Office according to the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 Conference
- ◆ Maintains a webpage on the INTERNET: <http://www.unoosa.org>





## United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

### Space Applications Section

**Chief: Alice Lee (United States)**

- Promotes, through international cooperation, the use of space technologies and data for sustainable economic and social development in developing countries
- Implements the United Nations Programme on Space Applications through workshops, seminars, training programmes, pilot projects, and support to the four regional centres for space science and technology education, affiliated to the United Nations: Africa (Morocco, Nigeria); Asia and the Pacific (India); Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil/Mexico)
- **Programme Objectives include:**
  - raising the awareness of decision makers of the cost-effectiveness and benefits to be obtained by using space technology;
  - establishing or strengthening the capacity in developing countries to use space technology;
  - strengthening outreach activities to disseminate awareness of the benefits of space technology.
- **Priority areas include :**  
Disaster management; satellite communications for telemedicine and tele-education applications; monitoring and protection of the environment, including the prevention of infectious diseases; management of natural resources; education and capacity-building, including research areas in basic space sciences





## OOSA and capacity building in space law

- ◆ Series of workshops on space law
- ◆ Space Law Website
- ◆ Treaty status database and national space legislation and policy database
- ◆ Dissemination of information (including Space Law Update)
- ◆ Technical Legal Assistance
- ◆ Monitor developments relating to international and national space law
- ◆ Conducting research and prepare background papers and studies





## UNISPACE III and its implementation

- ◆ **The Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) was held in Vienna 19-30 July 1999 (A/CONF.184/6)**
- ◆ **The Conference was attended by representatives of 100 States, 30 international organizations and the private sector**
- ◆ **UNISPACE III adopted a resolution “The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development”, whereby recommending 33 specific actions that should be taken by the international community to meet the global challenges to its goal of sustainable development. The resolution was endorsed by the General Assembly (GA resolution 54/68 of 6 December 1999)**
- ◆ **Mechanisms for implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III included the revision by COPUOS of the structure of the agendas of its Subcommittees, adoption of a plan of action of OOSA, establishment by Member States of action teams, as well as efforts at the national level**
- ◆ **In 2004, COPUOS adopted the report “Review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space”, the so-called UNISPACE III+5 review (A/59/174)**





## UNISPACE III and its implementation

- ◆ The UNISPACE III+5 report (A/59/174) included the following major topics:  
Background and result of UNISPACE III; mechanisms for implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III; progress achieved in implementing recommendations; synergies between the implementation of UNISPACE III recommendations and results of global conferences; assessment of implementation process; the way ahead/Plan of Action (actions to be taken, recommendations and suggestions for further implementation)
  
- ◆ The Plan of Action, endorsed by GA (59/2 of 20 October 2004), provides a long-term strategy for enhancing mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels in developing and strengthening the use of space science and technology and their application to:
  - a) support overarching global agendas for sustainable development
  - b) develop coordinated, global space capabilities
  - c) support specific agendas to meet human development needs at the global level
  - d) support overarching capacity development





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## **Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities**

- **Entities of the UN system that contribute to the Meeting on a regular basis:**

**OOSA, DESA, ISDR, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNEP, ECA, ESCAP,  
FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ITU, UNESCO, WFP, WHO, WMO**

- **Setting in motion follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development**
- **More interactions with COPUOS members**
- **Enhancing the information sharing and coordination of positions of UN entities in space-related areas**

**<http://uncosa.unvienna.org>**





## World Space Week

- ◆ Purpose - to celebrate the contribution that space science and technology can make to the betterment of the human condition
- ◆ Worldwide event 4 – 10 October annually
  - ◆ 4 October is the date Sputnik-1, the first artificial satellite, was launched in 1957
  - ◆ 10 October is the date that the General Assembly adopted the Outer Space Treaty of 1967
- ◆ Declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999
- ◆ Coordinated by Spaceweek International Association, a non-government organization
- ◆ Network of coordinators in 56 countries
- ◆ WSW 2005: Discovery and Imagination (50 countries)
- ◆ WSW 2006: Space for Saving Lives
- ◆ [www.spaceweek.org](http://www.spaceweek.org) for information and materials







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**Part B:**  
**COPUOS and Space Law**





## COPUOS and the legal regime on outer space

- ◆ **One of the biggest achievements of COPUOS was the development of five United Nations Treaties and five sets of Principles on Outer Space**
  - ◆ **Outer Space Treaty, 1967** (98 States parties / 27 additional signatures)
  - ◆ **Rescue Agreement, 1968** (88/25)
  - ◆ **Liability Convention, 1972** (83/25)
  - ◆ **Registration Convention, 1975** (46/4)
  - ◆ **Moon Agreement, 1979** (12/4)
  
  - ◆ **Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Uses of Outer Space (1963)**
  - ◆ **Principles Governing the Use by States of Artificial Earth Satellites for International Direct Television Broadcasting (1982)**
  - ◆ **Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space (1986)**
  - ◆ **Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space (1992)**
  - ◆ **Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interests of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries (1996)**





## United Nations Register on objects launched into Outer Space

### Background:

- Two separate, yet complementary registers on objects launched into outer space, maintained by the United Nations
- First register established in 1961 by GA resolution 1721 B (XVI) of 20 December 1961
- First register superseded by register established in accordance with the Registration Convention in 1976
- The original register is still used to disseminate information on space objects from Member States who are not party to the Registration Convention
- Total number of space objects in the Registers is approx 12,400. Figure includes duplicate registrations and functional and non-functional objects. About 6,000 are still orbiting around the Earth.





## United Nations Register on objects launched into Outer Space

### Function:

- The Registration Convention was adopted by the General Assembly on 12 November 1974, as GA resolution 3235. It was opened for signature on 14 January 1975, and entered into force on 15 September 1976
- Article III of the Registration Convention requires that the Secretary-General shall maintain a Register in which the information furnished in accordance with article IV shall be recorded. It also requires that there shall be full and open access to the information in this Register
- The main function of the Register is to a) make provision for the national registration by launching States of objects launched into outer space; b) serve as a central register of objects launched into outer space; and c) to provide for States Parties additional means and procedures to assist in the identification of space objects





## United Nations Register on objects launched into Outer Space

### Online index of objects launched into outer space:

- ◆ Web-database containing information received from Member States and also complementary information collected from external sources on all functional objects launched into outer space since 1957
- ◆ Space debris and non-functional objects are not included
- ◆ Search could be performed using different parameters (name, international designator, launching State, date of launch, orbital status, etc.)
- ◆ Provides links between space objects and their relevant documents of registration. This way, every user can download and print any registration document
- ◆ Also provides links to additional information transmitted to the UN (ie. Information provided under NPS Principles)
- ◆ Can be accessed through the UNOOSA website:

<http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/osoindex.html>





## Some Space Law considerations in the Legal Subcommittee

- **Review of the concept of the “launching State”**
  - *report of the Working Group A/AC.105/787, Annex IV, Appendix*
  - *GA resolution 59/115 of 10 December 2004 Application of the concept of the “launching State”*
- **Status and Application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space**
  - *report of the Working Group A/AC.105/826, Annex I, Appendix I and II*
  - *report of the Working Group A/AC.105/871 Annex I, Appendix*
- **Practice of States and international organizations in registering Space objects**
  - *report of the Working Group A/AC.105/871, Annex III*





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**THANK YOU**

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