The International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG) and the International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF) as mechanisms for cooperation

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Thank you for the kind introduction. This event is timely as last week in Prague over 250 participants attended the Ninth Meeting of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG), organized by the European Commission and the European GNSS Agency (GSA) on behalf of the European Union. Today, I am going to discuss the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG) and the International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF) as two successful examples of the broad variety of mechanisms through which states pursue international space cooperation.

The U.N. General Assembly's 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 (Benefits Declaration of 1996) states: "[i]nternational cooperation should be conducted in the modes that are considered most effective and appropriate by the countries concerned, including governmental and non-governmental; commercial and non-commercial; global, multilateral, regional or bilateral; and international

cooperation among countries in all levels of development." It also recognizes that the countries concerned "are free to determine all aspects of their participation in international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis." The importance of the Declaration was underscored in "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development" issued on the occasion of Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) in 1999.

Since the first meeting of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space 50 years ago, Nation States and international organizations have acted collectively to promote the peaceful exploration and use of outer space through a variety of mechanisms. These include the UN outer space treaties, associated non-binding principles and guidelines, bilateral and multilateral arrangements, regional conferences, and international coordination groups.

Included among the multilateral coordination groups are the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG) and the International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF). First I will discuss how and why the ICG and ISEF were formed and then highlight the key differences between the two coordination groups and how each one was developed in a manner to best meet their specific objectives.

ICG

Following UNISPACE III, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the "Vienna Declaration: Space Millennium for Human Development". The Vienna Declaration called for action, among other matters, to improve the efficiency and security of transport, search and rescue, geodesy and other activities by promoting the enhancement of, universal access to and compatibility of, space-based navigation and positioning systems. In response to that call, in 2001, COPOUS established the Action Team on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) to carry out those actions under the co-chairmanship of Italy and the United States of America. The Action Team on GNSS, consisting of 38 member States and 15 inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, recommended, among other things, that an International Committee on GNSS (ICG) should be established to promote the use of GNSS infrastructure on a global basis and to facilitate exchange of information. This recommendation was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2004 and the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG) was established in December 2005 under the umbrella of the United Nations.

The ICG brings together a coalition of Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) providers and representatives of users to promote compatibility and interoperability among global and regional systems to the benefit of users, and the integration of

GNSS technology and applications into infrastructures, particularly in developing countries. Members of the ICG include States and international organizations with responsibility for GNSS systems. The ICG also has associate members and observers to provide advice, monitor the committee, and participate in working groups. The institutional arrangements consist of a chair and plenary, a secretariat, and working groups. The plenary meets at least once a year and decisions are made by consensus of the members. The decision makers are the representatives of the member States and agencies.

The Providers' Forum is a subset of the ICG that provides a means to promote discussion and detailed exchanges among system providers. The Forum is open to Members of the United Nations that are or will be GNSS providers. Additional members are added by consensus. A chair is selected by consensus for each successive meeting. Secretariat functions are performed by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. The Providers' Forum meets at least once a year in conjunction with the ICG. Recommendations are made by consensus of the member States.

ISEF

On January 9, 2014, the United States hosted a very successful ministerial-level International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF), in Washington, D.C. The ISEF

provided an opportunity for nations to highlight the benefits to humankind of national investments in space exploration, and discuss policy issues relevant to the exploration, long-term sustainability, development and utilization of space.

Representatives from 32 nations plus the European Space Agency and the European Commission met to further advance the exploration and utilization of space and to highlight the direct benefit of these activities to humankind. The 2014 ISEF meeting continued the global policy dialogue on space exploration initiated at the European Union hosted Lucca Space Exploration Conference in November 2011.

ISEF participants in Washington considered three topics: National Policies and Public Support for Space Exploration; Space Exploration and Utilization: Strategies and Shared Goals; and International Cooperation in Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

During the Forum, delegates acknowledged that the International Space Station provides a visible symbol of the value of international cooperation, and is a stepping stone for broader future collaboration. Delegates also acknowledged the importance of building public support for space exploration by demonstrating how investing in space benefits humankind, prepares our future in science and technology, and boosts innovation leading to growth. With the participation by a

number of developing countries in the ISEF conference, delegates also recognized the value of space activities in promoting sustainable development.

Discussions highlighted that human and robotic space exploration is clearly worth the investment of government resources, providing benefits, direct and indirect, foreseen and unimagined for the citizens of Earth. The discussion highlighted that many of the space achievements of the last century would not have been possible without international cooperation. At the same time, competition-driven innovation at the industrial and scientific levels is also an important element in the evolution of space exploration.

Many countries at ISEF also recognized the amazing expansion in commercial spaceflight activities, which expand economic growth and bring new vitality and ideas to space exploration. They agreed that steps should be taken to facilitate the development of this sector in accordance with existing national and international guidelines.

At ISEF we also noted the need to expand the role of the COPUOS as an important venue for developing guidelines on key emerging issues, building on the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. These globally important issues include ensuring the long-term sustainability of the space environment for all users, in particular from threats

posed by orbital debris, and protecting Earth from asteroids and other potentially hazardous objects.

ISEF was noteworthy in that it involved the participation for the first time by a large number of developing countries. This demonstrates the growing utilization of space by newly emerging space faring nations and the increased role they will inevitably play in future international space exploration cooperation. Participants noted the need for discussion international frameworks and common principles for collaboration on future exploration, drawing on the experience of projects such as the ISS.

The ISEF participants welcomed the offer by Japan to host the next international space exploration forum in 2016 or 2017 and agreed that policy-level consultations should continue in the interim until the next meeting.

Similarities and Differences

If we look at the two mechanisms I have just discussed, the ICG and ISEF, it becomes clear that, although they have some similarities, they are quite different in their origins, longevity, institutional structure, objectives and participants. First, in terms of their origin, the ICG was created through the post-UNISPACE III Action Team process and therefore, involved any interested UN nation state under the UN umbrella. This ensured that the ICG was an inclusive "international" process

from the beginning. In contrast, ISEF began as an EU-hosted "High-level Space Exploration Policy Dialogue," which primarily involved European countries and the major space faring nations from other regions of the world. This dialogue only became a fully global forum with the decision by the U.S. at the EU Lucca event in 2011 to host the first ISEF meeting.

Second, although both mechanisms are multilateral in structure, the ICG involves a combination of governmental and private sector representatives, whereas ISEF includes only high-level governmental representatives. This is an important distinction, and one that was made with much thought. The ICG, in order to be successful, requires expertise at both the governmental and private sector levels. ISEF, while recognizing the importance of commercial spaceflight in exploration activities, is largely focused on generating political support for space exploration, and therefore is much more focused on bringing together high-level officials who can be seen as key decision makers within their respective governments. This does not mean there isn't a role for the commercial sector in ISEF, but recognizing that the key participants in ISEF are high-level government officials is important.

Finally, the ICG forum is very structured and, because it was created under the umbrella of the UN, has a Secretariat and Working Groups. This allows the ICG to achieve its objectives by enabling subject matter experts to focus on specific areas of the ICG's overall work plan, and construct targeted, actionable

recommendations for accomplishing the work for consideration by the committee. ISEF, on the other hand, has no formal structure and relies heavily on host nations – from the EU, to the United States, to Japan – to help guide the preparatory process for developing an agenda and consensus summary. It can be seen as the very beginning of a process to bring countries together at a political –level to enhance cooperation in space exploration. At the second ISEF meeting in Japan, it is expected that high-level representatives will again be given the opportunity to share views on space exploration and delegations will contribute to a Forum Summary which contains general aspirations from the participating countries. As ISEF develops it may evolve into a body that facilitates participating country involvement in concrete actions or workplans, but its evolution will depend on how it can best help interested nations shape their own space exploration programs in ways that can contribute to collaborative international space exploration goals and initiatives.

These are just a few examples of how these two cooperation mechanisms are similar, yet different, as necessary, to achieve the objectives they were created to achieve. Understanding why and how each cooperation mechanism was created is important as States look to employ different cooperation mechanisms in the future. As noted earlier, the Benefits Declaration of 1996 states: "[i]nternational cooperation should be conducted in the modes that are considered most effective

and appropriate by the countries concerned." It is with this objective in mind that the COPUOS Legal Subcommittee undertook it's five year work plan to take stock of the existing stock of the range of international cooperative mechanisms employed by Member States with the view of developing an understanding of the range of collaborative mechanisms employed by States and international organizations and when and why different mechanisms are favored by States.