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English only

**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space**
Legal Subcommittee
Fifty-fourth session
Vienna, 13-24 April 2015

2018 “UNISPACE+50” THEME OF STSC, LSC and COPUOS

Note by the Secretariat

At the fifty-second session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, held from 2 to 13 February 2015, the Working Group of the Whole of the Subcommittee considered the item on space technology for socioeconomic development in the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the post-2015 development agenda.

In this context, the Working Group had before it a note by the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space entitled “2018 ‘UNISPACE+50’ theme of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Legal Subcommittee and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space” (A/AC.105/C.1/2015/CRP.30).

The Working Group agreed to the main proposal by the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee, and requested the Secretariat, in close consultation with the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee, to develop their proposal in further detail and present it for consideration by the Committee at its fifty-eighth session in June 2015.*

The present document contains the text of the note by the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, as it was presented to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

* For more details on the recommendations of the Working Group of the Whole, see the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on its fifty-second session (A/AC.105/1088, Annex I, paras. 2-4).

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2018 “UNISPACE+50” THEME OF STSC, LSC and COPUOS

Note by the Past, Present and Incoming Chairs of COPUOS

I. Background

1. 2018 marks the 50th anniversary of UNISPACE I held in 1968, and this could be a fitting time to take stock of the contributions of the three UNISPACE conferences (I of 1968, II of 1982 and III of 1999) to global space governance. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) and Legal Subcommittee (LSC), and supported by the Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), have, for the past 50 years, contributed extensively to the fostering of international cooperation in space activities at the international, regional, interregional and national levels for the benefit of all countries.

2. The 50th anniversary of the first UNISPACE conference is an opportunity to consider the current status and chart the future role of COPUOS at a time when more actors, both governmental and non-governmental, are increasingly involved in ventures to explore space and carry out space activities. It has been 15 years since UNISPACE III that was, by all accounts, a success both substantively and organizationally. UNISPACE III was also the last United Nations global conference of the millennium. Much has changed in the space enterprise since the beginning of the 21st century and it is appropriate for the global space community to take stock of what has been accomplished and what can be expected for the future, including through looking into the results of the multi-year review of the implementation of UNISPACE III (UNISPACE III+5).

3. COPUOS, together with its subsidiary bodies and its secretariat, UNOOSA, provides a unique platform at the global level. The inter-relationship and dialogue between major space-faring nations and emerging space nations relating to increased international cooperation and capacity-building efforts for the benefit of developing countries provide fundamental prerequisites for success over the years. The space agenda is evolving and becoming more complex, not least considering the broader concept of space security, as well as the expanding commercial space sector. The nature of space activities is evolving to meet those realities. The development of international mechanisms such as guidelines, codes and other confidence-building measures are reflective of this new environment.

4. Addressing challenges to humanity and sustainable development, protecting the space environment, and securing the long-term sustainability of outer space activities all require further attention. The post-2015 development agenda will be adopted in 2015 with the establishment of new Sustainable Development Goals, and this major target argues for stronger space governance and supporting structures in the future at all levels, including improved spatial data infrastructure.

5. The evolution of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space from the beginning of the space age has the potential to provide impetus for considering international mechanisms and infrastructures of space cooperation and coordination mechanisms at the international, regional, interregional and national

levels. Against this background there could also be consideration of ways and means for strengthening the role of COPUOS and UNOOSA within the United Nations system and the global space community.

6. There will be a number of specific milestones leading towards 2018 in the work of COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies where governance structures are addressed, inter alia:

(a) A joint GA First Committee and Fourth Committee session on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities will be held in 2015, and COPUOS has established procedures to study those aspects relating to the safety of space operations and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities in general;

(b) The 10th anniversary of ICG will be commemorated in 2015;

(c) 2016 will mark the 10th anniversary of UN-SPIDER;

(d) The LTS guidelines are scheduled to be adopted in 2016;

(e) 2017 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty;

(f) The LSC item on international mechanisms concludes in 2017;

(g) The NEO coordination mechanisms of SMPAG and IAWN are being established;

(h) The workplan for the socioeconomic and sustainable development items of STSC and COPUOS concludes in 2018; and

(i) STSC has in 2014 established new working mechanisms for considering space weather and global health.

In addition, the next International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF) is being planned to take place in 2016/17. It should be recalled that the final summary of ISEF acknowledges that COPUOS is an important venue for expanding humanity's horizons in space and that there is a need for discussion of international frameworks and common principles for collaboration in future space exploration.

7. It is clear that the format for 2018 requires a different and more simplified approach than for the past major conferences due to the current nature of space affairs and the financial situation. Thus, the following main structure is proposed:

1. The Group of Bureau Members (G-15), including Working Group chairs of COPUOS, STSC and LSC and the Director of UNOOSA, serve as the steering committee for the preparations of 2018;

2. The sessions of STSC, LSC and COPUOS in 2018 will not change in duration and format for the purpose of the 2018 agenda. There will be no additional cost for servicing those bodies in 2018;

3. Each intergovernmental body should address the overarching theme of "UNISPACE+50" under their respective agendas, and States members of the Committee and permanent observers would be encouraged to address certain thematic priorities under this overall framework, to be agreed in the preparatory years 2015-2017;

4. All Member States of the United Nations and the broader space community, including United Nations entities, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector, should be invited to participate in a dedicated commemorative segment of COPUOS in June 2018;
 5. The report of COPUOS to the General Assembly in 2018 could be labelled under the theme and a dedicated GA resolution or declaration could be adopted in 2018;
 6. The next Secretary-General report under the UN-Space inter-agency coordination mechanisms will be issued in 2016 and could look into how United Nations system entities interact with each other and other stakeholders in supporting global governance of space activities. The report could serve as an input to 2018.
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