

Keynote Address 2010 by Professor Dr. Sompong Sucharitkul, Dean of Rangsit University School of Law, Thailand

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NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW GOVERNING SPACE ACTIVITIES

“GREAT EXPECTATION : THE PEACEFUL USE OF OUTER SPACE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC”

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like in the first place to express my deepest gratitude to the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) and the United Nations/ Thailand/ European Space Agency (ESA) for jointly organizing the current Workshop on Space Law, entitled “Activities of States in Outer Space in Light of New Development: Meeting International Responsibilities and Establishing National and Legal Policy Frameworks”, starting the workshop this morning and will continue deliberations on the subject for the next four days in succession. I am also extremely grateful to the two co-hosts for inviting me to deliver a keynote address for this auspicious occasion on this topic of great practical significance.

It is with great expectation that everyone has been watching for the turn of the decade in this twenty-first century to witness a new era of space law which hopefully will be treasured as another epoch-making transformation of a new “SPACE AGE”.

My first encounter with this topic of space law dated back almost exactly one score years ago in 1991, when I had my first opportunity to address an International Conference on the Law, Policy and Commerce of International Air Transport and Space Activities: “The Highway of Air and Space over Asia”. At that Conference in Chinese Taipei, I delivered my maiden address on “The Benefits of Space Activities for Asian Countries”. To the best of my recollection, I took occasion to examine the use of terms: “space”, “outer space” and “air space”; and to discuss in outline questions relating to the freedom of all-inclusive “space” and “the law and legal framework governing space activities”, tracing relevant legal developments from the immediate recent past up to May 1991.

Subsequent to that date, I had further opportunities to participate in International Conferences on Space Law. In August 2006, in Bangkok, I addressed the opening of the Conference by highlighting two principal themes, namely, the principle of active cooperation or the duty to cooperate with particular reference to the practice of Asian nations, as well as pertinent legal issues facing Asian and other nations in their collective endeavors to make the best out of the peaceful use of outer space, emphasizing, in particular, the urgent need for a common approach and a unified stand to tackle and resolve what appear to have been for some time unending international legal problems.

On October 2007, in Chiangmai, Northern Thailand, I had the honor and distinct privilege of welcoming participants from all over Thailand and the world over to the historic Conference on Space Law and Space Activities for Disaster Management in the Asian Pacific Region, on behalf of the Rector Magnificus, President Dr. Arthit Ourairat of Rangsit University, as one of the co-sponsoring institutions of that Conference together with the University of Chiangmai. The question of disaster warning has proved to be of practical values in the planning and preparations for the natural disaster, following unprecedented violent storm and gale as well

as earthquakes and landslides that most recently visited Thailand this season with high casualties, including over two hundred fatalities and losses of human lives. These could not have been prevented or averted, but with an adequate system of disaster warning, the number of fatalities and casualties could have been lowered than actually occurred in living realities in various parts of Thailand, in the North, North-East, Eastern and Southern Thailand as recently as last week.

Again my latest engagement with international legal developments in the field of space law should be mentioned. This took place almost exactly two years ago in Bangkok also in November 2008 at another UN Workshop on Space Law. It was an update review of Activities of States in Outer Space in Light of New Developments; Meeting International Responsibilities and Establishing National and Legal Policy Frameworks, right up to November of 2008.

We are assembled at this gathering today for the auspicious opening of the Seventh United Nations Workshop on Space Law, this time jointly organized by the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) together with the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) of Thailand and the European Space Agency (ESA), hosted by the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Thailand. High hopes have been raised with the greatest expectation of the peoples of the Asian Pacific Region for greater and more meaningful use of outer space for the practical benefit of mankind as a whole, and especially for further advancement of the welfare and living standards of the inhabitants of Asia and the Pacific.

The current Workshop will review the progressive development of international law governing space activities conducted by Governments and international enterprises in the extensive exploration and peaceful exploitation of the outer space, which constitutes the common heritage of mankind. Participants are encouraged to promote further exchanges of views and experiences to enhance the effective application of international norms, as evidenced by the practice of States in their respective national regulations and in their untiring efforts to initiate productive novel cooperative projects within their respective regions of the world. In this constructive way, the Workshop could be expected to yield fruitful crops in terms of observations, recommendations and conclusions which will lead to further protect and promote the primary interests and essential benefits for the world at large without losing sight of the vital interests and significance of the region.

Finally, it is my hope and expectation that the Workshop will be able once more to reaffirm the love and respect that States continue to display in support of the Rule of Law recognizing the basic obligation of States to cooperate for the common benefit of the human kind.