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**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space
Legal Subcommittee
Sixty-first session**
Vienna, 28 March–8 April 2022

Draft report

VIII. Future role and method of work of the Committee

1. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [76/76](#), the Subcommittee considered agenda item 10, entitled “Future role and method of work of the Committee”.
2. The representatives of China, France, Indonesia, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States made statements under agenda item 10. During the general exchange of views, statements relating to the item were made by representatives of other member States.
3. The Subcommittee had before it a note by the Secretariat on the governance and method of work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies ([A/AC.105/C.1/L.384](#)).
4. The Subcommittee recalled the agreement by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee that the multi-year workplan on the governance and method of work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, as contained in paragraph 2 of document [A/AC.105/C.1/L.384](#), be extended until 2023, that the Secretariat should update document [A/AC.105/C.1/L.384](#) for further consideration by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its sixtieth session, in 2023, and that those updates should include the considerations made by the Committee and its Subcommittees prior to and during 2022.
5. The Subcommittee noted that the Committee and its Subcommittees served as a unique platform for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.
6. The view was expressed that the Committee should strengthen its interaction with relevant international organizations through appropriate means to increase the awareness of Member States of the relevant processes and to prevent the fragmentation of global governance in outer space.
7. Some delegations expressed the view that the discussion of important topics on the space agenda should be carried out in the framework of the Committee and that transferring such discussions to parallel platforms would have a negative effect on the role of the Committee.
8. Some delegations expressed the view that the Committee should focus exclusively on promoting the peaceful uses of outer space, while matters of



preventing escalation and conflict that could arise from the use of weapons against space systems, or the use of outer space for military and other national security activities, should be dealt with in the United Nations disarmament platforms.

9. The view was expressed that the work of United Nations entities with regard to space-related issues should be closely coordinated with the work of the Committee.

10. The view was expressed that the Committee should be more proactive in responding to emerging challenges, including issues such as satellite megaconstellations in low Earth orbits, the impact of private business activities on outer space governance and the sustainable development of space technology services.

11. The view was expressed that the Committee should focus its work on the development of complex solutions for ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, including in the areas of space debris mitigation and remediation, space traffic management, small satellites, and the prevention and resolution of conflicts arising from outer space activities.

12. Some delegations expressed the view that new items should be added to the agenda of the Committee and its Subcommittees only when other items were removed.

13. The view was expressed that it was important to further strengthen the intergovernmental status of the Committee and that dialogue with commercial operators and scientific and academic circles should be conducted in such a way as to avoid any form of interference in the work of the Committee.

14. The view was expressed that the Committee should consider new and innovative ways to best engage relevant stakeholders, such as those from industry, academia and civil society, in its activities.

15. The view was expressed that, in accordance with its permanent observer status, the European Union should be invited to participate in the work of the working groups of the Committee and its Subcommittees.

16. The view was expressed that the principle of consensus applied by the Committee allowed it to make universally applicable decisions aimed at addressing a broad range of emerging issues in the area of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

17. The view was expressed that increased coordination, interaction and synergies between the Subcommittees on cross-cutting issues would increase the efficiency of their work.

18. The view was expressed that the Subcommittee should ensure that its reports were action-oriented, so that States could follow the outcomes of the Subcommittee meetings and incorporate them into their space activities.

19. The view was expressed that the hybrid format of the current session, which had included live webcasting of plenary sessions with interpretation into the six official languages of the United Nations, had allowed greater participation of countries in the work of the Subcommittees, and that such a hybrid format could be maintained for the future sessions of the Committee and its Subcommittees.

20. The view was expressed that a procedure to follow in cases of force majeure should be established to ensure the continuity of the work of the Committee in crisis situations, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

IX. General exchange of information and views on legal mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation and remediation measures, taking into account the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

21. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/76](#), the Legal Subcommittee considered agenda item 11, entitled “General exchange of information and views on legal mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation and remediation measures, taking into account the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee”, as a single issue/item for discussion.

22. The representatives of Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) made statements under agenda item 11. A statement was made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. During the general exchange of views, statements relating to the item were also made by representatives of other member States.

23. The Subcommittee had before it a conference room paper entitled “Compendium of space debris mitigation standards adopted by States and international organizations” (A/AC.105/C.2/2022/CRP.17).

24. The Subcommittee expressed concern at the increasing amount of space debris and noted that the endorsement by the General Assembly, in its resolution [62/217](#), of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had been an important step in providing all spacefaring nations with guidance on ways to mitigate the problem.

25. The Subcommittee noted with satisfaction that some States were implementing space debris mitigation measures consistent with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee, the Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities of the Committee, the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, International Organization for Standardization standard ISO 24113:2011 (Space systems: space debris mitigation requirements) and/or ITU recommendation ITU-R S.1003 (Environmental protection of the geostationary-satellite orbit).

26. The Subcommittee also noted with satisfaction that some States had taken measures to incorporate internationally recognized guidelines and standards related to space debris into the relevant provisions of their national legislation. The Subcommittee further noted that some States had strengthened their national mechanisms governing space debris mitigation by nominating governmental supervisory authorities, involving academia and industry and developing new legislative norms, instructions, standards and frameworks.

27. The Subcommittee further noted that IADC, whose initial work had served as the basis for the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee, had updated its own Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines in 2021 to reflect the evolving understanding of the space debris situation.

28. The Subcommittee noted with satisfaction that the compendium of space debris mitigation standards adopted by States and international organizations, developed at the initiative of Canada, Czechia and Germany, enabled all interested stakeholders to benefit from access to a comprehensive and structured set of current instruments and measures on space debris mitigation. The Subcommittee expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for updating and maintaining the compendium and keeping the latest version available on a dedicated web page.

29. Some delegations expressed the view that national policy and regulatory frameworks for space activities offered a key solution for limiting the generation of space debris.

30. Some delegations expressed the view that international standard-setting efforts must be pursued and deepened on an ongoing basis and that international efforts must be complemented by national efforts.
31. The view was expressed that, if non-legally binding guidelines and best practices were not sufficient to ensure effective end-of-mission disposal and safe re-entry, further legally binding instruments might have to be developed.
32. The view was expressed that the Legal Subcommittee should increase its interaction with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, with the aim of promoting the development of binding international standards addressing issues relating to space debris.
33. Some delegations expressed the view that, since approaches to mitigating the problem of space debris were linked to evolving technologies, and given the cost-benefit trade-offs of using them, it was not necessary to develop legally binding space debris mitigation standards at present.
34. Some delegations expressed the view that the Subcommittee should discuss the legal issues relating to space debris and space debris removal, including the legal definition of space debris, the legal status of space debris fragments, the role of the State of registry, jurisdiction and control over the space objects to be declared as space debris, and responsibility and liability for active removal activities, including liability for damage caused as a result of debris remediation operations.
35. The view was expressed that the Subcommittee should determine the legal status of space debris fragments not registered in any national register or in the Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space, harmonize international and national law on the regulation of property rights in relation to space objects, not only spacecraft, and coordinate international procedures for identifying space debris objects and their trajectory characteristics and for assessing the safety of removing such objects from orbit.
36. Some delegations expressed the view that it was important for all States to register all objects launched into outer space and that no object should be removed without the prior consent or authorization of the State of registry.
37. Some delegations expressed the view that good registration practice was the foundation for enabling active debris removal and in-orbit servicing missions, and that transparency and international collaboration were essential to the success of such missions.
38. Some delegations expressed the view that, in decongesting outer space through space debris remediation, States should act in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which was based on the recognition that the actors largely responsible for creating space debris should be the most involved in space debris removal activities and should make their scientific and legal expertise available to countries with lower levels of space development.
39. The view was expressed that an international fund should be established to support coordinated space debris removal efforts by providing means to deal with the technological and financial aspects of such operations, and that the participation of States in the common fund should depend on the role that those States had had in the generation of space debris.
40. The view was expressed that there was a need for an international mechanism for managing space debris and minimizing its harmful effects on the safety of the space assets of all States.
41. The view was expressed that it was important to adopt safeguards to control and prevent the generation of space debris, in order to minimize the risk posed to humans on Earth by the re-entry of space debris.

42. The view was expressed that the issue of space debris must be addressed in a way that would not negatively affect the space capabilities of developing countries or impose unnecessary burdens on the space programmes of those countries.
43. Some delegations expressed the view that it was important to strengthen the capacity of developing countries for the voluntary implementation of space debris mitigation measures.
44. Some delegations expressed the view that developing countries and non-spacefaring States should be provided with access to relevant technical and legal knowledge for the implementation of space debris mitigation guidelines and standards, including on collision avoidance.
45. Some delegations expressed the view that all nations should refrain from the intentional destruction of space objects, as such destruction could significantly increase the risks to human space flight and other space activities.
46. The view was expressed that the Subcommittee should discuss procedures for the active removal and destruction of space objects, procedures in relation to unregistered space objects, and the safe conduct of space operations in relation to avoiding the collision of space objects.
47. The view was expressed that it was important that States implemented not only post-mission disposal measures, but also measures on the active removal of space debris and on space traffic management, and that steps should be taken to protect outer space from pollution resulting not only from space debris, but also from light and radio emissions.
48. The Subcommittee agreed that States members of the Committee and international intergovernmental organizations having permanent observer status with the Committee should be invited to contribute further to the compendium of space debris mitigation standards adopted by States and international organizations by providing or updating the information on any legislation or standards adopted with regard to space debris mitigation, using the template provided for that purpose. The Subcommittee also agreed that all other States Members of the United Nations should be invited to contribute to the compendium and encouraged States with such regulations or standards to provide information on them.
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