



STATEMENT BY DR. RAMESHWAR ORAON, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 31: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE [FOURTH COMMITTEE] OF THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 25, 2007

Mr. Chairman

The Indian Delegation is pleased to see you chair our deliberations on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of Outer Space at this Session. We would also like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Dr. Gerard Brachet of France for successfully guiding the deliberations of the 50th session of COPUOS.

This year marks fifty years since the Sputnik became the first man-made object to orbit the earth. The United Nations General Assembly and the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) have made a significant contribution since then to strengthening international space cooperation and to maintaining the peaceful character of outer space. This has benefited both space-faring and space-using nations. As we look ahead at exciting new ventures in the next fifty years of the space age, my delegation is convinced that international cooperation, particularly under UN auspices, would play an even more important role than it has since the launch of Sputnik.

India participated actively in the deliberations of the 50th Session of the COPUOS during which the Committee reviewed the works and recommendations of the 44th Session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-committee and the 46th Session of the Legal Sub-committee. The Indian Delegation is delighted that during the 44th Session of the S&T Sub-committee of the COPUOS, consensus has been reached on the acceptance of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines document. The Indian delegation considers this as one of the significant and concrete results being achieved towards successful implementation of the UNISPACE-III recommendations. Similarly, the contributions of the Legal Sub-committee over the years in developing the international legal regime of Outer Space have been quite noteworthy. In our view, the Legal Sub-committee occupies a leading and prestigious role in evolving and safeguarding the entire body of International Space Law, which is founded on ethical principles.

My delegation endorses the report of the COPUOS.

Mr Chairman

The Indian Space Programme continues to prioritise utilization of Space technology for socio-economic development. This has resulted in specific user driven application programmes using remote sensing, meteorological and communications satellite systems. Let me briefly present for the information of delegates the significant achievements made by India in the space field since the last session.

During January 2007, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLVC7, successfully launched four satellites. These included two national primary satellites and two auxiliary satellites belonging to an international customer. In March 2007, India's communication satellite INSAT-4B designed for meeting Direct-to-Home television broadcasting requirements was successfully launched by European Ariance-5 launch vehicle from Kourou, French Guyana. It carried 12 high power Ku-band and 12 C-band transponders. In April 2007, India's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C8, successfully launched the 350 kg AGILE satellite of the Italian Space Agency. Last month, ISRO's Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle GSLV-F04 successfully launched the national communication satellite INSAT-4CR.

In the area of Space Application programmes for national development and in the context of our effort to provide quality education across the country, the Tele-Education project undertaken a couple of years back has made considerable impact. ISRO has also undertaken a Tele-Medicine project with a view to reaching medical expertise to remote and inaccessible areas. The number of Tele-Education, Tele-Medicine and Village Resource Centre networks has increased in recent years providing for better outreach. The Village Resource Centre is a single window delivery mechanism for a variety of space based products and services, such as tele-education, tele-medicine, information on natural resources for planning and development at local level, interactive advisories on agriculture, fisheries, land management, live stock and water resources management. Today the Village Resource Centres that have been established across the country are providing valuable inputs to the local community and helping them in addressing a variety of social and economic challenges.

Mr Chairman

A very important element of India's space activity has been international co-operation. We continue to cooperate with a number of space related agencies through bilateral and multilateral agreements.

In 2006, two major workshops were held in India. The first, held in August 2006, was sponsored by the UN, India and the United States and focused on "Tele-Medicine in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan". The other was in the context of the International Heliophysical year 2007 and focused on basic space sciences. The Indian Space Research Organisation is also participating in the Sentinel Asia project initiative, conceived under the aegis of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum.

India hosted the 58th International Astronautical Congress at Hyderabad from 24th to 27th September 2007 under the umbrella of International Astronautical Federation, International Academy of Astronautics and International Institute of Space Law. Special events befitting the 50th anniversary of the space age were organized during the Congress.

Mr Chairman

India takes special interest in sharing its expertise and services in the application of space technology with developing countries. The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education Asia and Pacific Region, affiliated with the UN is an initiative in this direction. The Center has so far carried out 26 Postgraduate programmes of a duration of nine months and 3 are currently under way. In addition, it has organized a number of short-term courses/workshops. So far 708 scholars from 30 countries from the Asia-Pacific region and 26 scholars from 16 countries outside the Asia-Pacific region have benefited from the educational activities of the center.

Mr Chairman

Utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes serves the interests of all nations. The long-standing international consensus on peaceful uses of outer space could be undermined by deployment of weapons in outer space or of weapons that target assets in outer space. There is a need therefore to redouble efforts to ensure that space remains the common heritage of mankind for peaceful uses and to avoid any steps towards its weaponisation. This is the responsibility in particular of all space-faring nations. India supports a multilateral engagement to build consensus on international instruments banning the weaponisation of outer space and for elaborating CBMs and transparency measures in outer space activities.

In recent times, the free availability of high-resolution imagery of sensitive areas on the Internet has emerged as a concern for many nations. There is a risk that such information may be misused by irresponsible actors, especially terrorists. In this context, it is important that guidelines consistent with national policies are evolved to regulate the availability of such sensitive data in the public domain.

Mr Chairman, the UN has an important role to play in increasing awareness of the relevance of space applications for sustainable development and in encouraging nations to take up space application programmes. India would continue to participate actively in UN activities for cooperative uses of space science and for maintaining outer space as a shared, peaceful heritage of mankind.

Thank you.

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