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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities on its thirtieth session *

(Geneva, 10-12 March 2010)

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held its thirtieth session at the headquarters of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Geneva from 10 to 12 March 2010, under the chairmanship of Yvon Henri of ITU.
2. The Deputy Secretary-General of ITU, Houlin Zhao, gave a welcoming address. He recognized that the Meeting played an important role in creating synergies in the space-related work of United Nations entities and emphasized the importance of enhanced communications during disasters and emergencies. The topic of the open informal session was highly relevant and timely in view of recent devastating disasters.
3. The Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, Mazlan Othman, made opening remarks. She recalled the need to further strengthen the Secretary-General's report on the coordination of space-related activities in the United Nations system, as the primary tool for increasing awareness of space-related activities among United Nations entities.
4. The Chair, in his introductory remarks, highlighted that the Inter-Agency Meeting was celebrating its thirtieth anniversary and that it should look into prospects for enhanced coordination and cooperation within the United Nations system.
5. The list of participants is contained in annex I and the agenda adopted by the Meeting is contained in annex II to the present report.

* The present report was adopted by the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities at its thirtieth session, held from 10 to 12 March 2010.



II. Substantive issues considered at the Meeting

A. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas

1. Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes

6. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, as the secretariat of the Inter-Agency Meeting, informed the Meeting about the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies, bringing to its attention matters relating to inter-agency coordination.

7. The Meeting agreed that the Chair of the Inter-Agency Meeting should participate in the fifty-third session of the Committee, in 2010, to report on its work.

8. Representatives of participating United Nations entities reported on their activities and plans for 2010 and 2011. Activities involving significant cooperation and coordination among the entities, as well as their plans for new activities, have been included in the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2010-2011 (A/AC.105/961). All Meeting documents are available on the website of the Office for Outer Space Affairs on the coordination of outer space activities (<http://www.uncosa.unvienna.org/uncosa/en/index.html>).

2. Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2010-2011

9. The Meeting reviewed and endorsed the draft report of the Secretary-General, as revised, and noted that it would be considered by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-third session, in 2010.

10. The Meeting agreed that the report served as a strategic tool for the United Nations to avoid duplication of efforts in the field of space science and technology, and that future reports should highlight efforts of the United Nations system in delivering as one on space-related activities for the development agenda.

11. The Meeting agreed that future reports should be restructured to address the thematic clusters of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the periods 2012-2013, 2014-2015 and 2016-2017. The report should be issued on a biennial basis, starting with the period 2012-2013, and a review of this reporting structure should be made in 2017. The content should carefully reflect the thematic areas and cross-cutting issues under the consideration of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The overall reporting on policies and strategies pertaining to the coordination of space-related activities, on human security and welfare and on humanitarian assistance should be retained. The Meeting agreed that the report should also identify challenges faced in space-related activities of the United Nations system and monitor progress made in addressing those challenges.

12. The Meeting agreed that efforts should continue to be made to ensure that submissions by United Nations entities specifically address coordination mechanisms and synergies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of space-related activities of the United Nations.

13. The Meeting requested its secretariat to establish a collaborative online tool for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General, with the aim of facilitating its timely finalization.

14. The Meeting further agreed that in the year when there was no report of the Secretary-General, a special report on a selected topic should be considered (see section 3 below).

3. Preparation of a report on initiatives and applications for space-related inter-agency cooperation

15. The Meeting noted with appreciation that the report “Space benefits for Africa: contribution of the United Nations system” (A/AC.105/941), prepared by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and in consultation with other United Nations entities, had been presented to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-second session, in 2009, and to the third African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development, held in Algiers from 7 to 9 December 2009. The Meeting further noted that the report was available on the website of the Commission on Sustainable Development for its eighteenth session, to be held in May 2010.

16. The Meeting agreed that a special report addressing climate change and the use of space technology within the United Nations system should be prepared under the leadership of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in cooperation with the Office for Outer Space Affairs and with contributions of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other United Nations entities, for endorsement by the Meeting at its thirty-first session, in 2011, and for submission to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-fourth session, in 2011.

17. The Meeting also agreed on the issuance of a brochure, drawing on the main elements of the special report referred to above, to be prepared by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in consultation with WMO, the secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and other United Nations entities, for publication in time for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in late 2011.

18. Future special reports for consideration on a biennial basis, starting in 2012, could address topics related to geospatial data infrastructure (to be coordinated with the secretariat of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group), the process of the World Summit on the Information Society (to be coordinated with ITU), human security and humanitarian assistance (to be coordinated with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) and any other emerging issues.

4. Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities

19. The Meeting noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 64/86, had welcomed the increased efforts to strengthen further the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities as the central United Nations mechanism for building partnerships and coordinating space-related activities.

20. The Meeting agreed to continue pursuing efforts to establish a link with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination in view of the increasing role of space technology and its applications in the work of the United Nations.

21. The Meeting noted with concern the continued absence of representatives from a number of major United Nations entities and programmes and encouraged the secretariat of the Inter-Agency Meeting to continue its efforts to involve those entities in the Meeting. In that regard, the Meeting recommended that its thirty-first session should be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, during the first half of 2011, and noted that coordination with its secretariat could facilitate the integration of some substantive agenda items of the Inter-Agency Meeting in the agenda of the Working Group.

B. Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

22. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, as the secretariat of the Inter-Agency Meeting, reported on the decisions of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its forty-seventh session, held from 8 to 19 February 2010, regarding the way forward in its consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Use of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) and the need to focus efforts on the contribution by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to the thematic cluster of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

C. Use of spatial data and activities related to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure

23. The Office for Outer Space Affairs informed the Meeting about the ongoing work of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, co-chaired by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and ECA. The Meeting noted that the main tasks of the Working Group were to improve the coordination of geospatial activities in the United Nations system, such as those on standardizing and improving access to geographic data (including space-based data). It was also noted that the Working Group facilitated the implementation of the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure, which works on technical deliverables and on a better institutionalization of the coordination of geographic information, including through the Office of Information and Communication Technology of the Secretariat.

D. Participation in the process of the Group on Earth Observations

24. WMO informed the Meeting about recent activities of the Inter-Agency Coordination and Planning Committee, which is a coordination mechanism involving the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, WMO and the International Council for Science, relating to their participation in the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), through the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS).

25. The Meeting recognized the valuable work being undertaken within the framework of the Inter-Agency Coordination and Planning Committee, and agreed that in view of the implementation of the Spatial Data Infrastructure as a central mechanism in the United Nations system for data access and availability, WMO and the United Nations Geographical Information Working Group secretariat should make efforts to broaden the joint statement of the members of the Inter-Agency Coordination and Planning Committee to the Ministerial Summit of the Group on Earth Observations, to be held in Beijing in November 2010, by including issues of importance to other relevant United Nations entities, as appropriate.

E. Operational framework and good practices in the use of space-based technologies for disaster risk reduction and emergency response

26. The Office for Outer Space Affairs informed the Meeting about the activities of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) programme, undertaken in 2009, and on activities planned for 2010-2011. The Meeting noted the growing network of regional support offices and the efforts to establish a fund for SpaceAid.

F. Public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation

27. The Meeting agreed to continue enhancing the website (www.uncosa.unvienna.org) and that the focal points of the Meeting should continue to provide the Office for Outer Space Affairs, on a regular basis, with updated information on their space-related programmes and activities, including relevant website addresses and upcoming activities, for posting on the site.

28. The Meeting recalled that the brochure entitled "Space solutions for the world's problems: how the United Nations family uses space technology to achieve development goals", had been published in 2006 and was in need of revision and updating. At the same time, the Meeting recognized the need to focus attention on the special publication on climate change and space-related activities in the United Nations system, and therefore agreed that the former publication could be revised at a later stage.

29. The Meeting considered further means for public outreach and information exchange and, in order to enhance awareness of the space-related activities of United Nations entities, agreed to make widely available the report of the Secretary-General and the special reports through the relevant organizations and programmes.

III. Other matters

Future programme of work

30. The Meeting agreed on the following provisional agenda for its thirty-first session:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General for the period 2012-2013;
 - (c) Special report addressing climate change and the use of space technology in the United Nations system;
 - (d) Publication on the topic of climate change and the use of space technology in the United Nations system;
 - (e) Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities, including public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation.
4. Use of spatial data and activities related to the United Nations Geographical Information Working Group and the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure.
5. Participation in the process of the Group on Earth Observations.
6. Operational framework and good practices in the use of space-based technologies for disaster risk reduction and emergency response.
7. Other matters.

31. The Meeting noted with appreciation that UNHCR had offered to host its thirty-first session. The Meeting agreed that the open informal session should be held in the afternoon of the last day of the session, with a theme to be selected in consultation with UNHCR.

32. The Meeting recommended that its thirty-first session should be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group.

Annex I

List of participants at the thirtieth session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 March 2010

Chair: Y. Henri (International Telecommunication Union)

Secretary: N. Hedman (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

Assistant Secretary: S. Vivanco (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

United Nations Secretariat

Office for Outer Space Affairs M. Othman
L. Czarán

Economic Commission for Europe B. Wachs

United Nations programmes and funds

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees L. St.-Pierre
K. Roberson

United Nations Institute for Training and Research/United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme O. van Damme

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development T. Fredriksson

Specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system

International Atomic Energy Agency D. Delattre

International Telecommunication Union A. Matas
S. Buonomo
K. Hughes

World Meteorological Organization B. Ryan
A. Sakamoto

Other United Nations entities

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat R. Lichte

Annex II

Agenda for the thirtieth session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 March 2010

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2010-2011;
 - (c) Preparation of a report on initiatives and applications for space-related inter-agency cooperation;
 - (d) Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities.
4. Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
5. Use of spatial data and activities related to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure.
6. Participation in the process of the Group on Earth Observations.
7. Operational framework and good practices in the use of space-based technologies for disaster risk reduction and emergency response.
8. Public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation.
9. Other matters.

Annex III**Agenda for the open informal session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva on 12 March 2010****Theme: “Space technology for emergency communications”**

Introductory remarks	Valery Timofeev, Director, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Radiocommunication Bureau
Introduction of participants	All participants
Presentations:	
United Nations Platform for Space- based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) programme and perspectives on emergency communications	Lorant Czaran (Office for Outer Space Affairs, UN-SPIDER)
Applying space technology to communicate with rural communities: the RANET project	Samuel Muchemi (World Meteorological Organization Public Weather Services Programme)
Telecommunications and information and communication technology for disaster management	Maritza Delgado (ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau)
ITU and satellite emergency radiocommunication system	Kevin Hughes (ITU Radiocommunication Bureau)
Discussions among United Nations entities and Member States	
Concluding remarks	Yvon Henri, Chair of the Inter- Agency Meeting
