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Review of international mechanisms for cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space

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Note by the Secretariat

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* A/AC.105/C.2/L.299.

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I. Introduction

1. At the fifty-fifth session of the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in 2016, the Working Group on the Review of International Mechanisms for Cooperation in the Peaceful Exploration and Use of Outer Space agreed that States members of the Committee and international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations having permanent observer status with the Committee should again be invited by the Secretariat to provide examples and information on the mechanisms they utilized for international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, in order to develop an understanding of the range of collaborative mechanisms employed and the circumstances in which States and international organizations favoured certain classes of mechanisms over others (A/AC.105/1113, para. 246 and annex III, para. 9 (a-c)). At its fifty-ninth session, in 2016, the Committee endorsed that decision of the Working Group (A/71/20, para. 209).

2. The present document has been prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of replies received by 24 January 2017 from Slovakia, Thailand and Turkey, and the World Meteorological Organization.

II. Replies received from States members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Slovakia

[Original: English]
[7 December 2016]

Slovakia has been a member of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space since 2001 and has ratified four of the five United Nations space treaties, namely the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies; the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space; the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects; and the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

The results of the space research and activities undertaken by Slovakia are submitted biennially via the national contact point to the Committee on Space Research. The most recent report, “Space research in Slovakia 2014-2015”, was published by the Slovak Academy of Sciences (available at nccospar.saske.sk). Most of the achievements in space activities were the result of bilateral or multilateral collaboration with institutions and entrepreneurs in Slovakia and other countries.

Responsibility for space governance remains with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (Science and Technology Division). In 2015, a new interministerial body, the Committee for Space Activities in the Slovak Republic, was created. It is composed of representatives from relevant ministries, with advisory bodies consisting of experts from academia, research and industry. The goal of the Committee is to properly and effectively implement participation in the Plan for European Cooperating States programme, further developing and implementing the national space strategy and international bilateral and multilateral collaboration.

Slovakia became a full member of the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) in January 2006. Slovakia was the first

country from the group of Central and Eastern European States to achieve full membership of EUMETSAT.

The first official contact between the European Space Agency (ESA) and Slovakia started in the second half of 2005. Slovakia signed its first framework cooperation agreement with ESA in 2010, which enabled the exchange of experts and students under various programmes, allowing them to gain first-hand experience with ESA technologies and procedures. The European Cooperating State Agreement between Slovakia and ESA was signed in February 2015, followed by the signing of the Plan for European Cooperating State, and later its Charter, covering concrete institutions and programmes of collaboration between Slovakia and ESA. Seven ESA-selected projects have been financed from the 2016 Slovak national budget, and projects are already being planned in response to the second call for proposals under the ESA Plan for European Cooperating States. It is to be hoped that Slovak institutions will fulfil the high expectations of ESA on the quality of research and development, and that Slovakia will become a full ESA member State after 2020.

The country's current main effort in the field of space is cooperation with ESA through the Plan for European Cooperating States. It is believed that the cooperation with ESA will offer rich opportunities for the development of Slovakia, and that the country will also be able to participate fully in the space activities of the Horizon 2020 programme and other strategic programmes of the European Union, such as Galileo and Copernicus.

Slovakia is now ready to launch its first nationally built CubeSat-type satellite, called SkCUBE. Launch and initiation of the in-orbit operations are foreseen for 2017. The launch of the satellite into low Earth orbit (at an approximate altitude of 450-720 km) will be provided by the commercial company SpaceX, from the territory of the United States of America. SkCUBE is made up of an on-board computer, an electricity supply system and a communications system. It features a sensory system, an orientation control system and a small camera. The primary scientific experiment focuses on receiving very long radio waves from deep space and from the upper layers of the Earth atmosphere. The secondary objective of the project is to demonstrate the rising potential of Slovakia in the space sector and to bring about collaboration with international companies and organizations.

Slovakia has been very active and supportive in implementing the international radio frequency regulatory framework while planning and implementing its own satellite in-orbit operations. With regard to the launch of the first national satellite, Slovakia has fulfilled all the necessary international regulatory requirements established under the United Nations and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) treaties and conventions. The Slovak telecommunication bureau has successfully registered frequency allocations through the ITU Advanced Publication Information published in the ITU register in January 2016. As the SkCUBE satellite uses amateur radio frequencies, registration in the International Amateur Radio Union satellite frequencies register has also been successfully undertaken. In April 2016, the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the United Nations notified the Secretary-General (through note verbale ST/SG/SER.E/INF/34) of the establishment of the National Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space (with effect from 14 March 2016). The responsible entity for the register is the Department of Higher Education, Science and Research of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

Thailand

[Original: English]
[2 November 2016]

Thailand employs various international mechanisms for cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, as follows:

Subcommittee on Space Technology and Applications

The Ministry of Science and Technology, on behalf of Thailand, cooperates with its counterparts from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), through the ASEAN framework, namely:

(a) ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology;

(b) ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology.

The Subcommittee on Space Technology and Applications is a mechanism under the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology. It holds annual meetings in order to consider different means of cooperation. The cooperation activities of the Subcommittee are driven by resolutions.

Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization

The Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization is an international organization located in Beijing. It was founded in 2008. Thailand is represented by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology.

Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum

The Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum is a forum of space agencies in the Asia-Pacific region, initiated by the Japanese Space Agency (JAXA). The forum imposes no rules or regulations; participation is on a voluntary basis. Neither the number of participants nor the forms of participation are limited. Participants benefit from having an opportunity to meet and hold discussions with executives of the space agencies in the Asia-Pacific region.

International Astronautical Federation

The International Astronautical Federation (IAF) was founded in 1951 by a group of scientists interested in space research in order to build an international forum on space knowledge between the East and the West. The Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency has represented Thailand in IAF since 2010.

Committee on Space Research

The Committee on Space Research was set up by the International Council of Scientific Unions in 1958 with the purpose of creating a scientific community for the utilization of satellites and space exploration, as well as for the exchange of information on the basis of mutual cooperation. Thailand has been a member of COSPAR since 1959.

Group on Earth Observations

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is an ad hoc group consisting of 103 member countries, the European Commission and 106 participating organizations. Thailand is one of its founding members. GEO focuses on using satellite technology to solve problems such as natural disasters, environmental degradation and global warming.

Turkey

[Original: English]
[17 November 2016]

Turkey accords the utmost importance to international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. In order to contribute to the progressive development of international cooperation in that area, Turkey has signed several bilateral cooperation agreements with States and international organizations, including the following: (a) an agreement between the Government of Turkey and the European Space Agency concerning cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes; (b) the Convention of the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization; (c) an agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Turkey on cooperation in the field of research and use of space; and (d) an agreement relating to the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization.

III. Replies received from permanent observers of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

World Meteorological Organization

[Original: English]
[9 December 2015]

The space-based observing system supporting World Meteorological Organization (WMO) programmes is the result of long-standing and effective cooperation among satellite operators of WMO members, including operational and research and development agencies, under the joint auspices of the WMO Space Programme and the Coordination Group for Meteorological Satellites, which pursues technical coordination to ensure interoperability, contingency planning and operational continuity of observations in support of weather, climate and environment monitoring within the programmes of WMO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. In terms of contributing to the WMO Integrated Global Observing System, satellite operators are requested to share information about their space-based systems, data access mechanisms and other user support activities. Another useful forum for cooperation among space agencies is provided by the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites.