



# General Assembly

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## Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

### **Report of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space) on its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions**

**(Bonn, Germany, 27-28 May 2015 and New York, 3 March 2016)**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space) is a mechanism first set up in the mid-1970s to promote collaboration, synergy, the exchange of information and the coordination of plans and programmes between United Nations entities in the implementation of activities involving the use of space technology and its applications. It has evolved over time, and has held 36 sessions to date. The present document contains the reports of the two most recent sessions: the thirty-fifth and the thirty-sixth.

2. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 69/85 and 70/82, urged UN-Space, under the leadership of the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat, to continue to examine how space science and technology and their applications could contribute to implementing the Millennium Declaration and to the post-2015 development agenda process (resolution 69/85), and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/82), and encouraged entities of the United Nations system to participate, as appropriate, in UN-Space coordination efforts.

3. Also in its resolution 70/82, the General Assembly noted with satisfaction that the Office for Outer Space Affairs would issue a special report by UN-Space, for consideration by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-ninth session, on the implementation of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities as pertaining to the United Nations system, and coordinate the preparation of that report with relevant United Nations entities.

4. In line with the aforementioned General Assembly resolutions, the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions of UN-Space considered Earth observation and sustainable



development and transparency and confidence-building in outer space activities, respectively.

5. The thirty-fifth session of UN-Space was hosted by the Office for Outer Space Affairs on 27 May 2015 at the premises of the United Nations campus in Bonn, Germany. The session was held during the joint United Nations/Germany International Conference on Earth Observation: global solutions for the challenges of sustainable development in societies at risk, and was attuned to substantive matters under consideration at the Bonn Conference (see paragraph 6). The agenda for the thirty-fifth session of UN-Space, as adopted, is contained in annex I, and the list of participants is contained in annex II.

6. The twelfth open session of UN-Space was held on 27 May 2015 as a joint UN-Space-Bonn Conference high-level panel on space-based information for development. The open session was held in a completely new format to provide an opportunity to the participants of the Bonn Conference to engage in a dialogue with the United Nations system to review challenges and opportunities in mainstreaming space technology in key areas under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to look into common perspectives for increasing the use of Earth observations for the attainment of global development goals. Further information on the UN-Space-Bonn Conference high-level panel is contained in annex III.

7. The thirty-sixth session of UN-Space was held on 3 March 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The session, organized by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and hosted in coordination with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, focused, foremost, on the topic of transparency and confidence-building in relation to outer space activities. The agenda of the thirty-sixth session of UN-Space, as adopted, and the list of participants are contained in annexes IV and V.

## **II. Thirty-fifth session of UN-Space**

8. At its thirty-fourth session in 2014, UN-Space examined ways to further strengthen coordination and cooperation in planning and implementing space-related activities, and ways to follow a flexible approach to setting its agenda in order to be more adaptive to the present needs and interests of participating United Nations entities.

9. Following this adaptive approach, in an effort to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation among relevant entities, UN-Space held its thirty-fifth session on 27 May 2015 in Bonn, Germany, a global hub for knowledge-sharing and sustainable development. The session was structured so as to focus discussions on items of interest to the United Nations entities attending the Bonn Conference.

10. The session was chaired by the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs and was attended by representatives of the International Telecommunication Union, the World Health Organization, the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations University and the Office for Outer Space Affairs.

11. It was agreed at the session that the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system for the

period 2016-2017 should focus on assisting the Committee in its preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (“UNISPACE+50”), which would be a major element of the sessions of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies in 2018, and on providing an overview of the efforts by United Nations entities aimed at contributing to the main pillars of UNISPACE+50 and at promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

12. It was also agreed that the Office for Outer Space Affairs should reach out on behalf of UN-Space to other relevant inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as UN-Water and UN-Oceans and inform them about the efforts made by UN-Space, in particular in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that efforts should be made to study whether it would be beneficial to exchange staff on a temporary basis in order to enhance cross-sector coordination and cooperation among relevant United Nations entities. The creation of joint project teams with the aim of developing and managing new joint projects was also addressed.

13. The participants recalled the agreement at the thirty-fourth session of UN-Space, held in May 2014 in New York, that its next special report should address the theme of space for global health, and, in that connection, welcomed with appreciation the completion of that special report, prepared in the intersessional period for submission to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-eighth session, in 2015 (see A/AC.105/1091).

14. There was agreement that the report was a valuable addition to the collection of UN-Space special reports. Previous special reports had addressed the following themes: new and emerging technologies, applications and initiatives for space-related inter-agency cooperation (see A/AC.105/843); space benefits for Africa: contribution of the United Nations system (see A/AC.105/941); use of space technology within the United Nations system to address climate change issues (see A/AC.105/991); and space for agriculture development and food security (see A/AC.105/1042).

15. The organizers of the thirty-fifth UN-Space session had arranged the twelfth open session of UN-Space in a spirit of flexibility with a view to promoting dialogue among United Nations entities, Member States and other stakeholders. They followed a new format by integrating the event into an operational conference, the Bonn Conference.

16. The panellists at the open session represented a user-driven operational system for climate observations; a regional system for monitoring the Earth; a global think tank and postgraduate teaching organization, and a specialized agency of the United Nations dealing with international public health.

17. The Chair of the Global Climate Observing System stressed that satellite-based Earth observation data could and should be used to monitor not only climate and pollution-related variables, but also to assess the impacts of relevant policy interventions. He supported his statement with the example of the Beijing Olympics, during which air pollution had been monitored using space-based technologies.

18. The representative of the European Earth Observation Programme (Copernicus) presented the regional perspective from the point of view of the European Union. He encouraged stakeholders using Earth observation data to share

ways of and experiences in supporting environmental protection, disaster risk reduction and ocean monitoring procedures to ensure cross-fertilization of best practices in those fields, and called for long-term cooperation in Earth observation.

19. The views of the research community were presented by the United Nations University. Examples were showcased of the “over-promotion” of data, which occurred when on-site skills and knowledge were not sufficient for using the data promoted. The representative of the United Nations University also highlighted that satellite data could be used in unconventional ways, such as when satellite communication was used for tracking migration patterns, and stressed the role of education in convincing the public of the value of space-derived benefits.

20. The representative of the World Health Organization stressed that satellite-based technologies and public health were natural allies, citing as examples that those technologies could be used to estimate air pollution, monitor climate change, support emergency operations with real-time data, and link health-care providers with users through telemedicine.

21. The panel was followed by a question-and-answer session.

### **III. Thirty-sixth session of UN-Space**

22. At the thirty-fourth session of UN-Space, in 2014, it was agreed that, in view of the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189), which was welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/50, an ad hoc item should be included in the agenda of UN-Space at its thirty-fifth session, in 2015, in order to promote dialogue on transparency and confidence-building measures, and the sharing of information relevant to the report (see A/AC.105/1064, para. 29).

23. The topic of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities was not added as an ad hoc item to the agenda of the thirty-fifth session of UN-Space, mainly because other priority themes were under consideration at the Bonn Conference. Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities were, however, the primary focus of the thirty-sixth session of UN-Space.

24. The thirty-sixth session was chaired by the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, and was attended by representatives of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the International Telecommunication Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Department of Field Support, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office for Outer Space Affairs. The hosts of the session made available WebEx teleconferencing links, which allowed the cost-effective participation by United Nations entities based overseas.

25. At its fifty-eighth session, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space requested the Secretariat to issue a special report by UN-Space on the implementation of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities, and to include in that report information on how United Nations entities could assist

Member States in implementing the recommendations of the Group, and on means to coordinate the work of United Nations entities in this regard (see A/70/20, para. 339). At its thirty-sixth session, UN-Space considered a draft outline for this special report. On that occasion, the Office for Outer Space Affairs explained the rationale behind the draft outline and provided guidance on what further input was expected from other United Nations entities. United Nations entities participating in the session, including the Office for Disarmament Affairs, also expressed their views on how to improve the outline of the report.

26. Introductory remarks were made by the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in connection with the report of the Secretary-General, mandated by General Assembly resolution 70/53, on the coordination of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities in the United Nations system. The linkages were noted between the report of the Secretary-General, to be coordinated by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, in 2017, and the special report by UN-Space to be submitted to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-ninth session, in June 2016. The desire was noted to build synergies between the two reports.

27. A draft outline of a report of the Secretary-General was considered on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system for the period 2016-2017, to be submitted to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-ninth session, in June 2016, and contributions to be submitted by relevant United Nations entities were discussed.

28. The aims and efforts of the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals were introduced by a representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. There was agreement that it was useful to learn more about its work, which was being conducted in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **Annex I**

### **Agenda for the thirty-fifth session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space)**

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Coordination of future plans and programmes of common interest for cooperation and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas.
4. Use of spatial data and activities related to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure.
5. Contribution of space-based technology for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
6. Use of space-based technology for disaster risk reduction and emergency response.
7. Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system.
8. Special report on initiatives and applications for space-related inter-agency cooperation.
9. Means of strengthening the role of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities.
10. Open informal session (high-level panel on 28 May).
11. Future programme of work.

## Annex II

### List of participants at the thirty-fifth session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities

*Chair:* S. Di Pippo (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

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

*United Nations Secretariat*

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction	P. Basabe
Office for Outer Space Affairs	L. St-Pierre L. Czaran A. Duysenhanova

*Specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system*

International Telecommunication Union	A. Matas
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training	K. Armanious
United Nations University	J. Rhyner
World Health Organization	B. Menne

## Annex III

### **Programme for the twelfth open session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held on 28 May 2015**

#### **Joint UN-Space-Bonn Conference high-level panel on space-based information for development**

##### Introductory remarks

S. Di Pippo                      Office for Outer Space Affairs, Director

##### Panellists:

K. Holmlund                      Global Climate Observing System, Chair

P. Breger                          European Commission Copernicus Services, Deputy  
Head of Unit

J. Rhyner                          United Nations University, Vice-Rector

E. Paunovic                        World Health Organization, Head of Bonn Office

##### Discussion and round-up

S. Di Pippo                      Office for Outer Space Affairs, Director



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## Annex IV

### **Agenda for the thirty-sixth session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space)**

1. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda.
2. Welcome remarks by the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs (chair of the session).
3. Introductory notes by the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, including on the report by the Secretary-General on the coordination of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities in the United Nations system, mandated by General Assembly resolution 70/53 and to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, in 2017.
4. *Tour de table* with introduction of participating entities.
5. UN-Space special report on the implementation of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities as pertaining to the United Nations system, to be submitted to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in June 2016.
6. Introduction to the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals.
7. Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system for the period 2016-2017, to be submitted to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in June 2016.
8. Future programme of work of UN-Space.
9. Any other business.

## Annex V

### List of participants at the thirty-sixth session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities

*Chair:* S. Di Pippo (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

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

*United Nations Secretariat*

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs	W. Kim V. Mantels M. Spies K. Prizeman
Economic Commission for Africa	A. Nonguierma
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	T. Cabani
Department of Field Support	K. Eom A. Kagawa
Office for Outer Space Affairs	T. Keusen

*Specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system*

International Civil Aviation Organization	J. Blumenkron
International Telecommunication Union	A. Matas
Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	J. Post