Statement by Mr. Vijay Tiwathia, Minister on International Cooperation in the Peaceful uses of Outer Space - Agenda Item 86 - in the Special Political & Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on October 23, 2001

Mr. Chairman

The Indian delegation is pleased to take note of the progress made by the Committee at the 44th Session of the Committee of the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

We remain convinced that the implementation of the recommendations of the UNISPACE-III is of the highest priority. We note with satisfaction the progress made at the recent session of COPUOS in assigning priorities to the recommendations of UNISPACE III. We look forward to active participation in implementation of the UNISPACE III recommendations as a member of the Action Teams and as Interim Coordinator for recommendation on improving the management of earth's natural resources.

COPUOS also reviewed the work and recommendations of the 38th Session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-committee and the 40th Session of the Legal Sub-Committee. The Indian delegation expresses its satisfaction at the work of these two Sub-committees. The United Nations Programme on Space Application has contributed significantly in spite of budgetary constraints. The deliberations on the subjects of implementation of an Integrated Space-based Global Natural Disaster Management System, and Space Debris during the S&T Session were productive in achieving further progress.

We are pleased to note that COPUOS has reached consensus agreement on the enlargement of the membership of the Committee. We welcome this consensus agreement and support the adoption of this recommendation by the General Assembly. India is of the firm belief that the peaceful applications of space science and technology by all countries will form the strong basis for maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Chairman

Let me now turn to the work the Indian space programme has done over the last year. The first developmental flight of the Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-DI) was successfully launched on April 18, 2001, placing an experimental satellite GSAT-I into geo-synchronous transfer orbit. This flight is an important step in achieving the capability for launching geo-stationary satellites which are vital for the telecommunications, broadcasting and meteorological services for India.

The INSAT system now comprising INSAT-2C, INSAT-2DT, INSAT-2E and INSAT-3B is one of the largest domestic communication satellite systems in the world. New areas like interactive education through satellites and telemedicine applications are also being given priority in addition to the operational programmes.

The Indian remote sensing satellite system comprising IRS-IC, IRS-ID and IRS-4P besides IRS-P3, is an important constellation in the global scene today. It supports development applications in India in fields like agricultural crop forecasts, ground and surface water harvesting, forest survey, wasteland mapping, identifying potential fishing

zones, urban planning and environment monitoring and so on. Data from these satellites is also acquired and used by several countries under commercial agreements.

A new initiative for implementing National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) has been taken up in India. This initiative will establish suitable infrastructure for ensuring availability of spatial data and multi-level information for various developmental planning activities.

Mr. Chairman

International cooperation has been an important component of the Indian space programme, and India is making a significant contribution in the field of space education as part of the cooperative approach. The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific Region affiliated to the UN continues to make good progress. So far, a total of 285 scholars from 39 countries have attended the postgraduate courses organized by the Centre.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the French National Space Agency (CNES) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for conducting Phase B for a joint satellite mission called Megha Tropiques to study the atmospheric water cycle and the effect of tropical convective systems on the global climate. Data from the modular opto-electronic scanner from the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) on ISRO's IRS P-3 satellite is being received on a cooperative basis by ESA and NASA. ISRO is providing tracking support to NASA's ACE satellite during its periods of non-visibility from NASA ground stations. Meteorological data from Indian and US satellites are being exchanged and used for research in earth and atmospheric sciences.

ISRO celebrated the first World Space Week declared by the General Assembly, during 4-10 October 2000. The focus of the public outreach programmes during the week was the progress of space technology and its contributions in improving the quality of life.

Mr. Chairman

India considers the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space as an important frontier area which can benefit the developing countries in their development process. International cooperation is essential to preserve and strengthen our commitment to the exploration of outer space as a common heritage of mankind. We believe that the United Nations, through its Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, will continue to lead the efforts to further enhance international cooperation.