

Agenda Item 83: International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Statement by Hon'ble Mr. Madan Lal Khurana, MP on October 17, 2000

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me say how pleased we are over the progress achieved by the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) at its 43rd Session. We are also pleased to see the smooth election of the new Bureau of the Committee and its Sub-committees. India was elected Chairman of the Committee in 1997 when the changes in the working methods were first introduced and we are gratified by this seamless transition.

Over the past several years, COPUOS has worked well to promote international cooperation in outer space. This cooperation is essential for the development of technologies and applications related to outer space.

The implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE-III was the focus of the 43rd session of COPUOS. We attach great importance to the translation of the Nucleus of Strategies contained in the Vienna Declaration into Action Plans and welcome the two multi-year Work Plans agreed on at COPUOS – one on the implementation of an Integrated Space-based Global Natural Disaster Management System, and the other on strengthening the use of space-based products and services in the UN system. These Work Plans will contribute to the progress of space applications.

Another important recommendation of UNISPACE-III, adopted by the General Assembly, was the establishment of a Special Trust Fund to implement UNISPACE-III recommendations, especially to support the activities of Regional Centres for Space Science & Technology Education. We hope this Trust Fund will receive generous support.

Implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE-III will need contributions from intergovernmental, non-governmental and professional bodies in addition to Member States. However, the inter-governmental nature of COPOUS should be preserved and maintained, even as we encourage wider participation in the implementation of UNISPACE-III recommendations.

Let me briefly turn to the Indian space programme, whose main thrust continues to be the application of space technology for national development. The first satellite in the INSAT-3 series, INSAT-3B, was launched successfully on 21st March this year. It facilitates enhanced business communication through the use of VSATs, and the broadcasting of community education programmes.

Our Government has also approved a policy that envisages the allocation of INSAT system capacity for non-governmental users, the registration of the Indian satellite system by private Indian companies, and the use of foreign satellites under special circumstances for satellite communication services in India. This policy framework is expected to offer increased opportunities to the business community and enhanced options to customers.

Remote sensing applications in India have reached operational decision-making levels. The National Drinking Water Mission, using remote sensing imageries, and involving 440,000 habitats has been launched. Remote sensing-based information on natural resources of India is institutionalised in the Natural Resources Information System (NRIS).

India hosted the ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and Pacific in New Delhi during 15-20 November 1999. Twenty-nine Members and Associate Members of ESCAP, and representatives from 12 UN Specialised Agencies and intergovernmental organisations, attended the Conference, which adopted the “Delhi Declaration on Space Technology Applications in Asia and the Pacific for Improved Quality of Life in the New Millennium.”

The Centre for Space Science and Technology education for Asia and Pacific Region, affiliated to the UN and based in India, continues to make good progress. So far 250 scholars from 33 countries in the region have worked at the Centre.

Mr. Chairman,

Recognizing that space technology can help in leapfrogging the development process, India has made a focused effort to develop and apply it for national development, with a strong commitment to peaceful use and to international cooperation. In the ever-expanding frontier of space and in unfolding opportunities for new applications, stronger and new ways of cooperation will emerge. We believe that the United Nations, through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and other forums, will be the spearhead for international cooperation.