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STUDY GUIDE

Dear Delegates,

We, the Chairpersons of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, would like to warmly welcome you to the inaugural session of the Saint Sebastians' College Model United Nations Conference.

We present you with this study guide as a starting point for your research, hence, the debate won't be limited to the topics listed and delegates have the freedom to discuss numerous subjects that fall under the scope of our mandate.

We look forward to seeing detailed solutions, accurate policy representation and an interesting mix of constructive (and destructive) debate, which would reflect your knowledge and understanding of the topic.

All the best for the conference!

Till then!

Your Chairs,

Pesala Welangalle, Sanchitha Wickrama and Chethiya Kalusinghe.

The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

This is a subcommittee of the main body of the UN (UNOOSA) which tackles outer space issues and works to promote international cooperation in the peaceful use and exploration of space, and in the utilization of space science and technology for sustainable economic and social development. Committee on peaceful use of outer space of COPUOS is a committee established by the GA to exclusively tackle barriers of creating a peaceful outer space. Being the only committee within the UN to tackle these kinds of issues, the committee itself has a unique position in this world where travelling space is becoming a casual move. This committee assists its member states to establish legal frameworks, promote the awareness of space science and helps strengthen the capacity of its member states to improve planetary defense.

Mandate

The Committee itself has two sub committees which tackles scientific and technological aspects of space and the legal aspect during the use of outer space. The committee also focuses upon both national level and global level efforts taken by its member states to promote a peaceful environment. It has the authority to monitor and advise its member states regarding any unacceptable behavior in usage of space. At the end the goal is to

maximize benefits by applying new scientific aspects and step by step achieving its set goals.

Conference Topic

“The commercialization, privatization, and potential resource exploitation of space”

Introduction

The vast expanse of space has long captivated humanity's imagination. Today, it stands not just as a frontier for exploration, but also a potential arena for economic activity and resource utilization.

Commercialization refers to the involvement of private entities in space exploration and utilization. This can encompass activities like satellite communication, space tourism, asteroid mining, and the development of space-based infrastructure.

Privatization goes a step further, potentially transferring ownership or control of space assets (like launch vehicles or space stations) from government agencies to private companies. This shift raises questions about access and regulation.

Resource exploitation explores the possibility of extracting valuable resources from celestial bodies – water ice on the Moon, minerals on asteroids, or even potential energy sources. However, this raises concerns about environmental impact and the legal framework governing such endeavors.

As we navigate this uncharted territory, COPUOS shoulders a critical responsibility. Balancing the potential economic benefits with the principles of peaceful exploration and the preservation of the space environment is paramount.

History

While the Space Race between the US and USSR (1957-1991) was primarily driven by national pride and military ambitions, there were always hints of economic potential. Satellite communication, a key technology of the era, had clear commercial applications. However, these applications remained largely hidden, overshadowed by the geopolitical competition.

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era of international collaboration in space exploration. Projects like the International Space Station (ISS) fostered cooperation and knowledge sharing. However, the high costs of space missions continued to be a challenge. This led governments to encourage private sector involvement, particularly in areas like launch services.

The 21st century witnessed a significant transformation. Companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin revolutionised launch technology with reusable rockets, dramatically reducing costs. This opened doors for a boom in commercial space activities. Satellite communication companies like Iridium and Globalstar flourished, while constellations like Starlink promised global internet access. Space tourism also took flight, with companies like Virgin Galactic offering suborbital experiences.

Core Principles

Following the ratification of the five U.N. foundational space treaties—whether with great or little support—the international space law community transitioned to the development of voluntary consensus principles and guidelines for space operations, debris mitigation and space sustainability.

Understanding and applying these principles is the precursor to resolving core issues pertaining to outer space.

1. Declaration on “International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries.”
2. “Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space”
3. Declaration of “Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space”

Important Treaties

1. The Outer Space Treaty

The Outer Space Treaty is considered the most comprehensive space treaty and provides the basic framework for international space law from issues surrounding weapons of mass destruction to the involvement of national entities.

However, the OST’s vague language about how states manage their space resources raises additional issues, as States have taken it upon themselves to define terms based on their own national priorities and interests. Hence, the economic incentives of both companies and

states involved jeopardises the prevention of resource exploitation as well as the development of comprehensive legal frameworks in the near future.

2. The Moon Treaty

The Moon Treaty has received the least support by Member nations for its reaffirmation and elaboration of Outer Space Treaty provisions in the context of appropriating and exploring the Moon and exploiting its resources.

Further, the treaty states that the Moon shall be used by all states “exclusively for peaceful purposes”. Additionally, it prohibits the placement or use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) on the Moon, as well as the “establishment of military bases, installations, and fortifications, the testing of any type of weapons and the conduct of military manoeuvres.

Resource Exploitation

Commercialization and privatisation have accelerated massively. Leading companies such as SpaceX, Blue Origin, and others are in the forefront with ambitious plans for satellite deployment, space tourism and colonization efforts. They are highly encouraged by the reduction in launch costs and advancing technology. Furthermore, resource exploitation for rare minerals and water on celestial bodies is a progressing area of interest though the legal frameworks and ethical considerations pose significant challenges. Growing initiatives such as Lunar and Asteroid Mining, involving multiple multi-billion dollar companies, have only worsened the problem.

With advancements in technology and increasing interest in space exploration, there is a growing concern about the equitable and responsible use of resources beyond Earth's atmosphere. Hence, it is crucial to understand the consequences and growing incentives surrounding the potential exploitation of outer space resources.

1. Limited Regulatory Framework

In an age where space is evolving and developing more rapidly than intergovernmental organisations can keep up, it is abundantly clear that the current global space governance framework—a product of the Cold War—is no longer adequate. In its current state, the global space governance framework excludes many space activities and allows actors to operate under wide-ranging and often conflicting interpretations of existing agreements

The Outer Space Treaty (1967), Rescue Agreement (1968), the Liability Convention (1972), and the Registration Conventions (1974) require substantial clarification in order to apply many of their principles to new space activities and issues, such as satellite servicing, space traffic management, tourism, or space debris mitigation. The Moon Treaty (1979) has too few signatories to be effective altogether.

2. Equitable Access

Ensuring equitable access to space resources is crucial to prevent monopolisation by a few nations or corporations. This requires establishing mechanisms for fair distribution and access to resources for all stakeholders. This is easily achievable via international cooperation, yet technological limitations and competitive incentives have hindered any such progress.

Expectations

1. Good understanding of the topic that is to be discussed in committee
2. Understanding the policy of the nation or agency that the delegate will be representing
3. Identification of the key areas of discussion
4. Presenting creative and innovative solutions concerning the problems that need to be addressed within the committee.
5. Understanding the incapability of some nations to participate in space projects due to possible reasons(delegates must come up with reasoning) and provide with steps to open ways where they can provide necessary support with the state they are
6. Identifying the parameters within the debate and making sure to have debate within those parameters so that a time waste wouldn't need to be expected
7. Maintaining the committee mandate throughout debate.
8. Diplomacy

Fulfilling these requirements would undoubtedly help you present yourself as a competent delegate in the eyes of the chairs and would be instrumental in helping you achieve the various awards in the committee.

Further, a few talking points to consider during debate:

- 1) The existing legal framework governing space activities, including the Outer Space Treaty.
- 2) The potential benefits and challenges associated with commercialization and privatisation.
- 3) Strategies for ensuring equitable access to space resources and preventing their monopolisation by a select few.
- 4) The environmental impact of space resource exploitation and the need for sustainable practices.

These points retain the core discussion topics that we expect to see discussed in conference. These, as all content of this study guide, are merely a starting point to get y'all going in the right direction.

Reference Links

Here are some links that might help you with your research. Happy researching!

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/global-legal-landscape-space-who-writes-rules-final-frontier>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-and-comparative-law-quarterly/article/inclusive-space-law-the-concept-of-benefit-sharing-in-the-outer-space-treaty/C33312A56A05D8B38C96CB5E3DDD0F41>

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/231739?v=pdf>

