



United Nations  
**Committee on the Peaceful  
Uses of Outer Space**

*History, Structure, Agenda, and Current Work*

Georgetown University Law Center  
13 April 2016

Christopher D. Johnson  
*Project Manger, Secure World Foundation*  
*J.D., LL.M., M.Sc.*



# United Nations System

## **Six principal organs of the United Nations (in no particular order) [UN Charter, Article 7.1]:**

- The General Assembly (UNGA)
- The Security Council (The P-5 are USA, UK, France, Russia, China)\*
- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
- Trusteeship Council (*suspended in 1994*)
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ)
- The Secretariat

*\*Non-permanent SC members: Angola, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain, Venezuela (2015, '16)*





# COPUOS in the United Nations System

## Main Committees to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

*The First Committee*

**Disarmament and International Security**

*The Second Committee*

Economic and Financial

*The Third Committee*

Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian

*The Fourth Committee*

**Special Political and Decolonization**

*The Fifth Committee*

Administrative and Budgetary

*The Sixth Committee*

Legal

+ Procedural Committees, and Standing Committees

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee deals with a variety of subjects which include those related to decolonization, Palestinian refugees and human rights, peacekeeping, mine action, outer space, public information, atomic radiation and University for Peace. **COPUOS reports to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (4<sup>th</sup> Committee).**

Meanwhile, the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) reports to the **Disarmament and International Security Committee (1<sup>st</sup> Committee).** However, the CD has been deadlocked for almost 20 years.

# UNGA First Committee, October 2014



UNGA First Committee, October 2014



**British News Reel on the Outer Space Treaty:**

<https://youtu.be/ncphbeoPJ8I>

*17 December 1966*

Mr. Kurt Waldheim (Austria)  
addressing the Committee  
on the Draft Treaty on  
Exploration and Uses of Outer Space.

UNGA First Committee  
United Nations, New York.





*17 December 1966 UN General Assembly First Committee.*

Mr. E.E. Seaton (United Republic of Tanzania) (right) and Mr. Arthur J. Goldberg (USA) addressing the Committee on the Draft Treaty on Exploration and Uses of Outer Space. United Nations, New York.

Source: United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. <http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/lawofouterspace.html>





*10 September 1962*  
Second Session of COPUOS

*(first row, left to right):*  
Ambassador T. P. Plimpton (USA), speaking  
Miss. J.A.C. Gutteridge (UK)  
Mr. El Sayed Raouf El Reedy (United Arab Republic)  
Ambassador Platon Morozov (USSR).



*9 September 1963* Fourth Session of COPUOS  
United Nations, New York.

Source: United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. <http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/lawofouterspace.html>



# History of COPUOS and Space Law

## *Instrument*

1958	UNGA Res. 1348 (XIII) COPUOS <i>ad hoc</i> committee
1959	UNGA Res. 1472 (XIV) COPUOS permanent committee
1961	UNGA Res. 1721 (XVI) <i>International Cooperation Resolution</i>
1963	UNGA Res. 1962 (XVIII) <i>Legal Principles Declaration</i>
<b>1967</b>	<b>Outer Space Treaty</b>
<b>1968</b>	<b>Rescue Agreement</b>
<b>1972</b>	<b>Liability Convention</b>
<b>1975</b>	<b>Registration Convention</b>
<b>1979</b>	<b>Moon Agreement</b>
1982	UNGA Res. 37/92 <i>Direct Broadcasting Principles</i>
1986	UNGA Res. 41/65 <i>Remote Sensing Principles</i>
1992	UNGA Res. 47/68 <i>Nuclear Power Sources Principles</i>
1996	UNGA Res. 51/122 <i>International Cooperation Declaration</i>
2007	UNGA Res. 62/217 <i>Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines</i>
2009	Nuclear Power Sources Safety Framework



# COPUOS Members and Observers

1959: 24 Member States

2016: 83 Member States

*(Question: Must States be party to the OST before becoming a Member of COPUOS?)*

<http://www.unoosa.org/>



# COPUOS Members and Observers

## Observers

---

Cote d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Panama, the Holy See, Sovereign Order of Malta.

---

### *Intergovernmental Organizations:*

The European Union (EU), Economic and Social Order for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO), the Association of Remote Sensing Centres in the Arab World, the European Organization for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere (ESO), the European Space Agency (ESA), the European Telecommunications Satellite Organization (EUTELSAT-IGO), the International Mobile Satellite Organization, the International Organization of Space Communications, the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization and the Regional Centre for Remote Sensing of North African States, and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)



# COPUOS Members and Observers

## OBSERVERS

---

### *Non-Governmental Organizations:*

the European Space Policy Institute (ESPI), the International Academy of Astronautics, the International Astronautical Federation (IAF), the International Institute of Space Law (IISL), the International Law Association (ILA), the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, the National Space Society (NSS), the Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water (PSIPW), the Scientific Committee on Solar-Terrestrial Physics (SCOSTEP), the Secure World Foundation (SWF), the Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) and the World Space Week Association (WSWA).



# 2015 COPUOS Schedule

## **2016 Schedule of work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies**

---

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>
53 <sup>nd</sup> Scientific and Technical Subcommittee	15 – 26 February 2016	Vienna
55 <sup>th</sup> Legal Subcommittee	4 - 15 April 2016	Vienna
59 <sup>th</sup> Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space	8 – 17 June 2016	Vienna

---



2014 Scientific and Technical Subcommittee



2010 COPUOS in the UN Vienna “M” Building,  
normally used by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)




2010 COPUOS in the UN Vienna “M” Building,  
normally used by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)



2010 COPUOS in the UN Vienna “M” Building,  
normally used by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)





Back in the traditional COPUOS room, UNOV “E” building, in 2014



# Working Groups of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

(all at <http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/>)

1. *Working Group of the Whole*
2. *Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space*
3. *Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities*  
Chair: Peter Martinez (South Africa). 2014 completed the preliminary draft guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. 33 non-binding guidelines for actors in space. Will be brought to COPUOS in June 2014 for further discussion prior to the 2015 STSC, where he hopes to achieve consensus on the draft guidelines. If successful, the final report could be presented to COPUOS in 2015 and possibly the UNGA thereafter.  
**A/AC.105/C.1/L.339** at <http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/>

BR D

BR D

C-88 D  
15:00-18:00  
**OOSA: COPUOS  
53RD SESSION  
LEGAL  
SUBCOMMITTEE**  
Thursday, 27 Apr 2012  
15:00

UNODC  
VIC ONLINE  
CONFERENCES  
PUBLIC TRANSPORT  
QR CODE



26 May 1959 First Session of the Legal Subcommittee. United Nations, New York.





# Agenda of the 2016 Legal Subcommittee

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of the Chair.
3. Statement by the Chair.
4. General exchange of views.
5. Information on the activities of international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations relating to space law.
6. Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space.
7. Matters relating to:
  - (a) The definition and delimitation of outer space;
  - (b) The character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union.
8. National legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space.
9. Capacity-building in space law.





# Agenda of the 2016 Legal Subcommittee

10. Review and possible revision of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space.
11. General exchange of information and views on legal mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation measures, taking into account the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.
12. General exchange of information on non-legally binding United Nations instruments on outer space.
13. General exchange of views on the legal aspects of space traffic management.
14. General exchange of views on the application of international law to small satellite activities.
15. Review of international mechanisms for cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space.
16. Proposals to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space for new items to be considered by the Legal Subcommittee at its fifty-sixth session.



# Working Groups of the Legal Subcommittee

1. *Working Group on the Status and Application of the Five United Nations Treaties on Outer Space.* Established 2010  
Chair: Jean-Françoise Mayence (Belgium) - Bernhard Schmidt-Tedd (Germany)
2. *Working Group on the Definition and Delimitation of Outer Space.*  
Chair: Prof. José-Monserrat Filho (Brazil)
3. *Working Group on Review of International Mechanisms for Cooperation in the Peaceful Exploration and Use of Outer Space.*  
Established 2013, workplan to 2017. Chair: Prof. Setsuko Aoki (Japan)



# 2016 COPUOS Agenda

(all at <http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/>)

## **Draft Provisional agenda for the fifty-ninth session of the Committee**

The Committee recommended that the following items be considered at its fifty-ninth session, in 2016:

1. Election of Officers
2. General exchange of views.
3. Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.
4. Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on its fifty-third session.
5. Report of the Legal Subcommittee on its fifty-fifth session.
6. Space and sustainable development.
7. Spin-off benefits of space technology: review of current status.
8. Space and water.
9. Space and climate change.
10. Use of space technology in the United Nations systems.
11. Future role of the Committee.
12. Other Matters.



*United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*

<http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/>

Questions / Comments?

Thank You!

Chris Johnson

[cjohnson@swfound.org](mailto:cjohnson@swfound.org)



*PROMOTING COOPERATIVE SOLUTIONS  
FOR SPACE SUSTAINABILITY*

[www.swfound.org](http://www.swfound.org)