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General Assembly Chair Report

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Chair Report for **The VIMUN General Assembly**

"The safe use of Space"

Introduction from the Secretariat:

Secretary General – Pavel Moroz

Greetings everyone and welcome to the UNGA Chair report. My name is Pavel Moroz, the Secretary General of this committee, and I will be taking care of you all along with the Chairs. As a Russian-Brit, I have been exposed to two very contrasting political views, which is why I decided to start my MUN journey four years ago. It was in order to solidify my own personal rights and wrongs as well as find a well-founded perspective on the world as a whole. The agenda at hand, *the safe use of space*, can be seen as deeply engrossing due to its unfamiliarity, yet also of great significance considering our current day and age as well as the recent SpaceX launch. I look forward to a stirring debate between delegates representing opposing superpowers. Good luck!

Chair – Murtaza Akbari

Hello everyone! My name is Murtaza Akbari and I am a Grade 12 high school student in Toronto, Canada. Spending half of my life growing up in Bahrain, I have had the unique opportunity to experience living in two countries with moderately contrasting political views. I began my MUN journey three years ago as I had an interest in debating with others, and I wanted to explore something new. Three years later, after attending eight MUN conferences, I can confidently affirm that MUN offers so much more aside from politics. It provides delegates the opportunity to expand their knowledge in understanding social, economical and environmental issues impacting nations globally, and researching to understand these issues will benefit delegates academically as well. Seemingly unfamiliar to most, the agenda at hand, *the safe use of space*, is a growing discussion provided the direction our world is heading, with the recent SpaceX launch, the 2024 mission to Mars, and growing number of nations announcing plans to begin their own space exploration programs.

Chair – Iman Bhat

Hello, my name is Iman Bhat! I was born and raised in the United States; however, my parents are originally from Kashmir. I have followed international political conflicts for years which has got me interested in politics and pursuing this ambition, I decided to join the Model United Nations club. This is my fourth year in MUN, and this will be my 16th conference. I truly

enjoy discussing political conflicts and issues that could and are immensely impacting our world today. It's an hour chairing the General Assembly and I really hope that all the delegates will have a fruitful debate when addressing *the safe use of space* since it allows us to be mindful of areas outside of our world.

Chair – Ayushman Agrawal Hingorani

Greetings delegates! I am Ayushman Agrawal Hingorani, born in India yet I have been raised in multiple parts of the world, which includes living in New Zealand for 5 years. Politics, history and science have been my interest since a young age, allowing me to become one of the 21 young experts all around India. This is my 5th year in MUN, 11th conference and the first conference that I will be chairing. The agenda at hand, *the safe usage of outer space*, has been one of the most interesting topics I have ever debated upon and look forward to witness interesting discussions regarding the same. Remember, you all are the harbinger of world peace, and your present ideas can influence the future, if not by yourself then by the butterfly effect.

Committee Introduction:

Distinguished delegates welcome to the General Assembly!

This organization is one of the principal organs of the United Nations. With the combination of all 193 Member States of the UN, this panel strives to maintain peacekeeping throughout nations and mainly deals with how to finance the peace operations. The Member States of this respective Assembly pays a certain amount of money for peace and security purposes, however, each Member State pays a different amount based on their economic wealth. The permanent Security Council Members, The United States, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, China, and France, are required to pay a larger amount due to their special role.

There are many committees in the General Assembly, but there are six main committees. In order, from the First Committee to the Sixth, ***Disarmament & International Security***, ***Economic & Financial***, ***Social, Humanitarian & Cultural***, ***Special Political & Decolonization***, ***Administrative & Budgetary***, ***Legal***. The First Committee, *Disarmament & International Security*, create solutions to problems that threaten peace amongst international communities. The Second Committee, *Economic & Financial*, deals with the financial aspect of nations and how to fund sustainable developments. Moreover, this committee aims to eradicate poverty and ensure food security. The *Social, Humanitarian & Cultural* Committee relates to Human Rights and how to advance on ongoing issues like women's equality or education for all children. The Fourth Committee, *Special Political & Decolonization*, adheres to the political issues that are not dealt with by the First Committee. The *Administrative & Budgetary* Committee plays a key role when financing for any peaceful purposes are imposed by the Security Council. Lastly, the Sixth Committee, *Legal*, deals with any legal matters proposed to the General Assembly.

The General Assembly has many powers that allow it to function. They can elect who becomes the non-permanent Member States of the Security Council. They are allowed to make recommendations in order to maintain peace and more importantly, they may take action in any situation that causes a threat to peacekeeping when the Security Council has failed to do so. The General Assembly aims to build peace by first achieving its 17 Sustainable Development Goals they created in 2015. The goals are as followed; **No Poverty**, **Zero Hunger**, **Good Health and Well-Being**, **Quality Education**, **Gender Equality**, **Clean Water and Sanitation**, **Affordable Clean Energy**, **Decent Work and Economic Growth**, **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**, **Reduced Inequalities**, **Sustainable Cities and Communities**, **Responsible Consumption and Production**, **Climate Action**, **Life Below Water**, **Life on Land**, **Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**, **Partnerships for the Goals**.

Topic Introduction:

This topic, *safe use of space*, is a significant key factor in keeping international peace; this is why it is mainly discussed in the General Assembly. It is highly unlikely that competition within the field of space would come to an end. However, a framework that allows nations to cooperate and benefit from one another is necessary. The weaponization of outer space goes hand in hand with technological advances, therefore existing, present treaties and agreements do not entirely address recent concerns. It is evident that the current legal framework addressing safety within outer space needs to be adjusted.

In January 2007, China successfully launched an ASAT (anti-satellite) that destroyed one of its aging weather satellites. This was followed up with a test conducted by the USA in February 2008, in which it also destroyed one of its own satellites. These two events are seen as catalysts that sparked international concern, as outer space could now be used as a place of military practice, therefore threatening the common view of space as a peaceful sanctuary. Since 1982, the United Nations has been the sole international body discussing and negotiating a valid international agreement that would prevent an arms race in space.

In 1985, the United States created the *United States Space Command*. This department is responsible for the deployment of military operations into Space. Seeing as how the military is starting to be involved, countries take this as a threat. The U.S has since launched many space probes in order to obtain more information about the solar system. These same actions have been done by other countries such as China and Russia. With three of these influential and nuclear-equipped nations trying to separately gather knowledge about space, other nations tend to become apprehensive which interrupts stable international relations.

The directorial state in the United States and Russia have immensely changed since the urge for superiority from 1955 to 1975. Although there are a few tensions nowadays regarding the *safe use of space*, the space race was a lesson for nations which allowed them to create **The Outer Space Treaty**. This agreement was formed in the General Assembly which provided a basic framework for how nations could use space. For example, the treaty includes how nations will be held responsible for any damages caused in space or any or any national space activities that are conducted. Moreover, the treaty clearly recognizes how nuclear weapons or any weapons of mass destruction shall not be placed in outer space. These principals were agreed and signed upon by the Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom in order to prevent any calamity that could occur from any nation.

Historical Background:

Concern over the peaceful use of space arose together with the dawn of the space age; generally considered to have begun in 1957 with the launch of Sputnik 1 by the USSR. During the 1960s, both the USA and the USSR engaged within the space race, developing technology for space exploration that was quickly altered and used for military purposes, such as the development of reconnaissance and communications satellites in addition to the use of rockets as ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads.

Despite this, the race to the Moon also established the concept of space as a peaceful sanctuary for all nations, where scientific and technological progress was idealized and its benefits would be provided to any or all. The Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 prohibited the testing of nuclear explosions within the atmosphere as well as space. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty further fortified the international consensus of space as a sanctuary by banning the placement of WMD(s) (weapons of mass destruction) in orbit.

The possibility of space weapons emerged during this time period but were constrained by technological and scientific limits. Many of the concerns over space weapons were linked to the nuclear arms race, as space was viewed as the ideal environment to deploy defense against ballistic missiles. Within the 1980s, the United States considered developing an anti-ballistic missile defense with new technologies which would include space systems, resulting in international concerns over the weaponization of space.

The Soviet Union raised concerns over advances in technology and therefore the possibility of development of space weapons in 1981, introducing a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly; geared towards preventing an arms race in space, as there was a concern that the present international legal framework covering space issues was insufficient to prevent an arms race in space.

There have been instances in the past where conventional weapons have been taken to space; the Soviet Cosmonauts carried the TP-82 pistols. Yet it must be remembered that the weapon had been carried not for its use in space, but rather after re-entry if by chance the capsule containing the Cosmonaut gets lost in the Russian wilderness. The Soviet Almaz Satellite was a military space station capable of carrying 23mm Rikhter cannons. Certain modifications of the station were to carry rockets instead. During the Cold War, the USSR had deployed a fractional orbital bombardment system; using which had the ability to place a nuclear warhead in low earth orbit. The development and deployment of such weaponry was stopped after the enactment of the Outer Space Treaty and the SALT II.

The Project Thor, introduced by the United States Air Force saw the idea of the usage of kinetic weaponry. It included the dropping of a 20ft long tungsten rod from space after placing it in orbit, which had the theoretical capability of causing more damage than a nuclear bomb. As per the USAF report of 2003, the payload was capable of reaching a speed of Mach 10 and had global strike capability. The project was short lived, due to large expenses. As kinetic bombardment is considered as a conventional weapon, there is no implemented treaty that prevents a nation from using such weaponry.

Certain treaties too emerged in the wake of such incidents, as nations started realising the harm that can be done due to the various loopholes in the Outer Space treaty, out of which the most important are the Article 2 and Article 4. While article 2 deals with the claiming of celestial property by nations, it says nothing against individuals. With the rapid commercialisation of space by various organisations, and previous instances of people selling celestial property, it is a must that this loophole be addressed in the committee. In a similar fashion, article 4 deals only with the placement of weapons of mass destruction while staying silent against the deployment of conventional weapons. Such a loophole can be used by nations to threaten world peace and sovereignty of other nations, therefore it is a must that something be done about it.
Previously nations have bought up treaties, namely the PAROS treaty and the PPWT, yet much remains for them to pass unanimously and be implemented by all nations.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. UNOOSA: United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs
2. UNCOPUOS: United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer space
3. Outer Space Treaty: The treaty on which the basis of Space Law was formed
4. Rescue Agreement: All members of the treaty should help astronauts that need help; meant to protect astronauts who accidentally landed in other countries.
5. Liability Convention: A country that launches something into space
6. Moon Treaty: The agreement governing the activities of states on the moon and other celestial bodies

7. START: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
8. WMD: Weapon(s) of Mass Destruction, capable of causing huge loss of life/extensive damage
9. Militarisation: the process by which a society organizes itself for military conflict and violence.
10. 10.) Armament: Military Weapons and Equipment
11. Conventional Weapons: Weapons that have been excluded from the list of WMD(s)
12. Celestial Body: Any natural body outside of the Earth's atmosphere
13. Low Earth Orbit: Orbit below 2,000 Km
14. Medium Earth Orbit: Orbit above 2,000 Km but below 35,768 Km
15. High Earth Orbit: Orbit above 35,768 Km
16. HANE: High Altitude Nuclear Explosion
17. NASA: National Aeronautics and Space Administration
18. ASAT: Anti-Satellite
19. PPWT: Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (DRAFT)
20. PAROS treaty: Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space treaty
21. FOBS: Fractional Orbital Bombardment System

Guiding Questions:

The following questions are simply a guide that delegates may use to assist them in getting started with their research. However, understanding the answers to the following questions from the perspective of your respective nation will greatly benefit your knowledge of this topic in preparation for the committee. There are also several resources attached, one of which contains every treaty created by the United Nations as well as the principles adopted by the United Nations.

Preliminary Research Questions

1) Who are your country's strongest allies and enemies? (*your nation will typically have similar political views to your strongest allies)
2) What power does the General Assembly have?
3) What (if anything) has your country done to contribute to space exploration?
4) Does your nation contain/plan to contain a Space task force with the centre idea being to make Space secure for the nation?

Important Treaties & Agreements

1) What is the 1967 Outer Space Treaty?
    a) What constitutes ‘peaceful use’ under the Outer Space Treaty?
    b) What clauses in the Outer Space Treaty should be redefined for better understanding in the 21st century?
    c) What are the major loopholes in the Outer Space Treaty?
2) Research and understand the following treaties which have been created by and are governed by the United Nations (these treaties are formal, official agreements which all nations that have ratified the agreements are required to follow):
    a) The Rescue Agreement
    b) Liability Convention
    c) Registration Convention
    d) Moon Convention
3) What are some past instances of the use of the liability convention?
4) What is the PPWT Treaty?
    a) Why is it still a draft?
    b) What changes can be introduced to make it implemented by all space faring nations
5) What is the PAROS Treaty?
    a) What is the reason for the creation of such a treaty after the implementation of Outer Space Treaty?
6) Which treaties have either directly or indirectly shaped the militarisation and commercialisation of Space (not limited to the treaties mentioned above)?

Militarization & Colonization of Space

1) Should countries be allowed sovereignty in space?
2) Should countries be allowed to militarize in space? Is the concept of a ‘demilitarized space’ feasible?
3) What are some examples of space weapons currently being used in space?
4) To what extent is militarized space a threat to global peace?
5) Should Kinetic weapons be banned from being placed in orbit?
6) How does this issue impact nations who do not have a space program?
7) How can the United Nations ensure that no nation is negatively affected from activities taking place in space?
8) What is asteroid mining?

Useful Resources

- Country Research Tips
- Topic Research Tips
- United Nations: Treaties and Principles on Outer Space

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