

Workshop on the Protection of Space Environment

Opening Keynote

Thank you for your kind introduction, Mr. Nishinaga.

Distinguished guest, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, friends, good morning.

Thank you for joining this very important and issue raising event on the Protection of Space Environment hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan at the occasion of 19th Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum held here in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Today, I am speaking in the capacity of the current chairman of the United Nations Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

As Chair of the UN COPUOS, I deal with many problems connected with the collaboration between the UN Member States to reach consensus on the use of space data, technology and applications to solve global or regional problems of the humanity, to help sustainable development at a global level.

Space science and technology and their applications, such as satellite communications, Earth observation systems and satellite navigation technologies, provide indispensable tools for achieving viable long-term solutions for sustainable development and can contribute more effectively to efforts to promote the development of all countries and regions of the world, to improving people's lives, to conserving natural resources and to enhancing the preparedness for and mitigation of the consequences of disasters.

As such, we are seeing that space science and exploration, Earth observations, climate change research, the sharing of environmental data, disaster mitigation and relief, space

surveillance for near earth objects and for debris monitoring and awareness are emerging as the most demanding fields for international collaboration.

At this point, I would now like to briefly speak about the perspectives of Japanese space exploration which mirrors UNCOPUOS's goals of shared responsibility in the space arena.

Japan believes that it is always important for a nation to consider the interests of the world as a whole. In order to accomplish this, all nations are required to consider and play a role in solving global issues. This is especially important when pursuing the increasing role of partnership, especially with emerging countries, whose presence has greatly increased amidst the backdrop of rapid economic growth.

Moving forward, it is important for Japan to maximize its overall capital strength, as well as its conceptual power, to aid in the resolution of international issues when required. In this regard, it is understood that Japan will strive to increase the scope of its diplomacy to include not only the national government, but also local governments, businesses, and collaborations with NGO's

Last year, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The 50th Anniversary Declaration which was adopted at United Nations General Assembly last year expressed firm conviction that advances in space science and space exploration serve as the pillars for the operational uses of space technology and its applications.

Thus, there is a need for us to take a closer look at how the recent advances in space science and technology and associated systems including space exploration activities might contribute to addressing specific issues of global concern. For instance,

there are the availability of clean and renewable energy, access to water, better management of land and coastal natural resources, food security and wider uses of tele-education and tele-health facilities including the strengthening of capacity building in each of these areas.

Similarly, we should also take a closer look at how scientific research in human spaceflight and their spin-offs could become a useful tool to advance development on Earth.

It is clear that the long-term benefits of space utilization will have a lasting impact on all humanity. That is why UNCOPUOS has been working so hard in monitoring and protecting this incredibly important shared resource.

As you know, the main objectives of UNCOPUOS are to maximize the benefits of the uses of space science and technology and their applications to increase coherence and synergy in international cooperation in space activities at various levels, as well as the legal regime and corresponding instrumental support efforts at the national, regional and global levels, including those of international space-related entities, which are being considered, taking into account the needs of developing countries in particular.

Therefore, UN COPUOS is the highest international platform for political, scientific, technical and legal debates, connected with space, a platform for negotiations, elaboration and promotion of important international treaties, agreements, UN resolutions and guidelines for all member states.

Existing UN treaties promote the idea that outer space shall be free for exploration and usable by all States without discrimination of any kind, on a basis of equality and in accordance with international law, and leading the way for free access to all areas of celestial bodies.

In recent years, the utilization of space has seen an increasing number of States, non-governmental organizations, private sector entities and even universities expanding their presence.

In an era where we are seeing space becoming increasingly crowded with new players, the need to show strong commitment to sharing responsibilities and acting responsibly in space to help prevent mishaps, misperceptions and mistrust has never been greater.

Therefore, the declaration also expressed deep concerns about the fragility of the space environment and the challenges for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, in particular the growing impact of space debris.

The proliferation of space debris and the increased possibility of a collision interfering with or causing damage to space objects raises concerns about long term sustainability of space activities, particularly the low-Earth orbit and geostationary orbit environment.

The environment in space is quite different from conditions on the ground and in the air, and the position of a space vehicle cannot be easily changed, as its movement or orbital behavior is strictly constrained to the orbit onto which it has been launched. Therefore, the questions on the benefit of space utilization and the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities should take into account such phenomena.

It is important to have close relations and direct communications among those persons concerned and intimate discussions are very important.

In this regard, we have to sustain the uses of outer space for all humankind.

Long-term sustainability of outer space activities or the protection of space environment is the most highlighted topic discussed at UNCOPUOS.

The work currently being carried out by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the UNCOPUOS through its Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities is critically important.

Its goal is to ensure the safe and sustainable uses of outer space over many years by future generations.

To implement a set of practical and prudent measures to enhance the long-term sustainability of space activities, the Working Group was established to address sustainable space utilization supporting sustainable development on Earth, space debris, space weather, space operations, tools to support collaborative space situational awareness, regulatory regimes, and guidance for actors in the space arena.

This is a remarkable task with the objective to identify and examine a wide range of issues and concerns to the long-term sustainability of space activities and prepare a consolidated set of practices and operating procedures and guidelines.

In the broader perspective, I think the work and processes being undertaken within other intergovernmental fora outside the Committee should also be recognized.

The Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities has through its terms of reference and methods of work set up a mechanism for enhanced sharing of information of several United Nations entities and international intergovernmental as well as non-governmental organizations, and other fora. They are the group of governmental experts on transparency and confidence building measures in space activities for the benefit of long-term space utilization by the international space community as a whole.

To adapt to emerging and future challenges to the global community, the United Nations system, in close coordination with its Member States, needs to find effective solutions to current and emerging global problems.

Space technology provides a wide range of essential tools for making informed decisions in support of development at local, national, regional and global levels in both public and private domains.

At the last meeting of COPUOS I drafted the paper, titled “next phase in global governance for space research and utilization” and distributed it as a conference paper.

You will find this paper on UNOOSA website.

My paper promotes my ideas on what should be discussed and targeted at COPUOS in the future as a new step to the next half a century.

Considering the current circumstances, the three main ideas I am proposing for targeting space research and utilization in response to the 50th Anniversary Declaration include the following:

1. To promote the role of the Committee and its Subcommittees as a unique platform at the global level for international cooperation in space research and long-term space utilization;
2. To promote greater dialogue between the Committee and regional and interregional cooperation mechanisms in space activities for the benefit of global development;
3. To strengthen the relevance of space science and technology and their applications in meeting the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

These topics will be discussed further at next COPUOS meetings.

For your information the United Nations System Task Team on

the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda has presented its report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations entitled “Realizing the Future We Want for All”.

This is a comprehensive assessment of the overall involvement of the UN system and the report will be part of the process leading up to 2015. There are many areas covered in the report where space-based technologies and data are of crucial importance.

In direct relation to space tools, I would like to bring to your attention about scientific understanding of the space environment, as well as the importance of improved access to geographical information and geospatial data for more accurate environmental, social impact assessments, moreover informed decision-making at all levels.

On a particularly positive note, we are seeing a number of nations and space-capable organizations adopting very close guidelines on space utilization to those sought by UNCOPUOS.

I sincerely hope that this workshop will contribute to such discussions and have great success towards the protection of space environment.

I conclude my speech.

Thank you for your attention.