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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities on its twenty-eighth^{*}

(Geneva, 16-18 January 2008)

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-4	3
II. Substantive issues considered at the Meeting	5-42	3
A. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas	5-23	3
B. Space-related outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development	24-25	6
C. Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space	26-28	6
D. Use by the United Nations of the Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters by the United Nations system and methods to increase operational collaboration in the use of space technology in emergency response	29-32	7
E. Lessons learned and good practices in the use of space technologies for relief efforts and disaster reduction	33	8
F. Participation of the entities of the United Nations system in the process of the Group on Earth Observations	34-37	8
G. Public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches in the United Nations system to promote the use of space technology and its applications	38	9

^{*} The present report was adopted by the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities at its twenty-eighth session, held from 16 to 18 January 2008.



H.	Public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation	39-42	9
III.	Other matters	43-47	10
	Future programme of work	43-47	10

Annexes

I.	List of participants at the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 16 to 18 January 2008		11
II.	Agenda for the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 16 to 18 January 2008		12
III.	Agenda for the open informal session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva on 18 January 2008		13

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held its twenty-eighth session at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 16 to 18 January 2008, hosted by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). The list of participants is contained in annex I to the present report.
2. Francesco Pisano of UNOSAT was elected Chairman. In his opening statement, the Chairman underlined the growing importance of the Meeting in building inter-agency partnerships and fostering global solutions, and in view of the increasing role of space technology and applications in the work of the United Nations.
3. The newly appointed Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat, Mazlan Othman, stressed the importance of the Meeting in the ongoing reforms in the United Nations system, spearheaded by the Secretary-General, to work in unison and deliver as one.
4. The Meeting adopted the agenda contained in annex II to the present report.

II. Substantive issues considered at the Meeting

A. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas

1. Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes

5. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, as the secretariat of the Inter-Agency Meeting, briefed participants on the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies, bringing to their attention matters relating to inter-agency coordination.
6. At its forty-fourth session, in 2007, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee had noted the work conducted by the Meeting at its twenty-seventh session. The report of the Meeting (A/AC.105/885), as well as the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2007-2008 (A/AC.105/886), were before the Subcommittee.
7. Representatives of all participating United Nations entities reported on their activities and plans for 2008 and 2009. Activities involving significant cooperation and coordination among the entities, as well as their plans for new activities, have been included in the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2008-2009 (A/AC.105/910). The Meeting heard special presentations from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU),

which are available on the website of the United Nations Coordination of Outer Space Activities (<http://www.uncosa.unvienna.org/uncosa/en/index.html>).

2. Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2008-2009

8. The Meeting had before it the draft report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2008-2009 (A/AC.105/910). The Meeting agreed that the report played an important role in fostering new inter-agency partnerships and synergies, and that it served as a strategic tool for the United Nations to avoid duplication of effort in the use of space applications and space-related activities.

9. The Meeting reviewed and amended the draft report. It decided not to retain the table on participants in outer space activities and matrix of outer space programmes of the previous report (A/AC.105/886) and instead to make the information in it available on the website for the United Nations Coordination of Outer Space Activities.

10. The report would be considered by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its forty-fifth session, in 2008.

3. Preparation of a report on initiatives and applications for space-related inter-agency cooperation

11. At its twenty-seventh session, in 2007, the Meeting had agreed to suspend the preparation of the report on initiatives and applications with a view to evaluating, at its twenty-eighth session, the need for and value of the information to be presented in the report and to consider its reorientation towards specific thematic areas.

12. The Meeting agreed that in 2008 such a report should be prepared by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in cooperation with ECA and in consultation with other United Nations entities for endorsement by the Meeting at its twenty-ninth session. The theme of the report would be the use of space technology for sustainable development in Africa. The Meeting also agreed that the report should be presented to the third African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development, in 2009.

4. Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities

13. The Meeting noted a number of joint projects and initiatives in the use of space applications carried out by United Nations entities, as well as a number of invitations extended by representatives of several of the entities to participants to become involved in joint initiatives.

14. The Meeting agreed on the importance of enhancing further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities. In that context, it identified the following current key issues for inter-agency coordination:

(a) Strengthening further the Inter-Agency Meeting as the United Nations central mechanism for coordination of space-related activities;

(b) Reinforcing the contributions made by United Nations entities to the implementation of the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI);

(c) Enhancing the use of space-based assets in support of disaster management and making optimal use of opportunities, such as the Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters (International Charter “Space and Major Disasters”) and the new United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) programme;

(d) Reinforcing the contributions made by United Nations entities to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and making optimal use of the System’s benefits to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations.

15. The Meeting noted with satisfaction that the United Nations Geographical Information Working Group had invited members of the Inter-Agency Meeting to attend the workshop on UNSDI deliverables hosted by the United Nations World Food Programme in Rome on 5 and 6 February 2008, where outputs of the UNSDI project would be defined.

16. The Meeting noted that, in its resolution 62/217, the General Assembly had encouraged entities of the United Nations system to participate fully in the work of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities.

17. The Meeting noted with concern the continued absence of a number of major United Nations entities and programmes and encouraged the secretariat to continue its efforts to involve those entities in the Meeting.

18. The Meeting noted with satisfaction that the Office for Outer Space Affairs was conducting a survey among the participating United Nations entities during the Meeting to evaluate its impact and effectiveness. The survey was part of concerted efforts by the secretariat of the Meeting to raise the profile of the Meeting and to promote inter-agency cooperation. The Office would continue to conduct the survey among other United Nations entities.

19. The Meeting agreed to continue to streamline the Secretary-General’s report and the report of the Meeting as practical tools for addressing operational concerns of the United Nations entities.

20. The Meeting noted the history of the Inter-Agency Meeting, which dated back to 1976 when it was an ad hoc subcommittee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, which in 2002 had been replaced by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. As space-related issues were at present not on the agenda of the Board, the Meeting agreed to establish a link with the Board in view of the increasing role that space technology and its applications had in the work of the United Nations.

21. The Meeting noted that it was important for the United Nations entities to promote awareness within the United Nations system, and beyond, of the benefits of space applications by increasing outreach efforts and employing more effectively such means of communication as the website for the United Nations Coordination of Outer Space Activities.

22. The Meeting noted that, in its resolution 62/217, the General Assembly had invited the Inter-Agency Meeting to continue to contribute to the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and to report to the Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work conducted at its annual sessions.

23. The Meeting noted that, following the successful open informal session held during the twenty-seventh session, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had welcomed enhanced interaction with United Nations entities.

B. Space-related outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

24. The Office for Outer Space Affairs presented the list of space-related initiatives and programmes carried out by member States of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and within the United Nations system that responded to specific recommendations contained in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development,¹ which could be accessed on the website for the United Nations Coordination of Outer Space Activities.²

25. The Meeting reviewed the usefulness of the list and assessed the potential duplication of effort, if the United Nations entities continued to provide updated information for inclusion in the list. The Meeting noted that the Commission on Sustainable Development was the established mechanism of the General Assembly for providing policy guidelines to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations in support of sustainable development, including the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In that context, the Meeting agreed that updating the list would be a duplication of effort and that it should be phased out.

C. Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

26. The Office for Outer Space Affairs briefed the Meeting on the status of the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular in the context of the work that had been undertaken by some action teams and the follow-up carried out in the framework of the Plan of Action resulting from the five-year review by the General Assembly of the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III (see A/59/174).

27. The Meeting agreed that it should continue to monitor developments in the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular in relation to the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the status of implementation and contribution to the thematic clusters of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

¹ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

² <http://www.uncosa.unvienna.org/uncosa/en/wssd/index.html>.

28. The Meeting took note of the report of the secretariat of the Meeting on the contribution of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development for the thematic cluster 2008-2009 (A/AC.105/892) and agreed that it should continue to contribute to the report of the Committee on its contribution to the Commission for the thematic cluster 2010-2011.

D. Use by the United Nations of the Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters by the United Nations system and methods to increase operational collaboration in the use of space technology in emergency response

29. The Meeting noted that the International Charter “Space and Major Disasters” had been activated 11 times in 2007 by United Nations entities through the Office for Outer Space Affairs, with support from UNOSAT, in response to natural and technological disasters. The number of times the Charter had so far been used by the United Nations totalled 44, which made the United Nations system the single largest collective user of the Charter’s services.

30. The Meeting took note of the fourth United Nations meeting on the use of space technologies for emergency response and humanitarian assistance, hosted jointly by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Office for Outer Space Affairs in Bangkok on 27 November 2007. That Meeting had brought together 10 United Nations entities and 7 other organizations to address the operational aspects of accessing the Charter, as well as other available initiatives, and had discussed ways to widen that access to other United Nations bodies, especially those operating at the field level.

31. The Office for Outer Space Affairs informed the Meeting that it would work with interested United Nations entities to develop a framework and set up the user focus group proposed at the Meeting in Bangkok.

32. The Meeting noted with appreciation the invitation by the Charter, extended through the Office for Outer Space Affairs, to the United Nations bodies that had accessed the Charter to participate in the next meeting of the Charter secretariat, to be hosted by the Canadian Space Agency from 15 to 17 April 2008. The Meeting also noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs would organize the Fifth United Nations-wide meeting on the use of space technologies for emergency response and humanitarian assistance in Bonn, Germany, on 14 October 2008. The aim of that meeting would be to bring together representatives from the field, giving priority to the eight pilot countries participating in the “One UN” initiative.

E. Lessons learned and good practices in the use of space technologies for relief efforts and disaster reduction

33. The Office for Outer Space Affairs made a presentation on the development of the UN-SPIDER programme,³ which is available on the website of the Office. The Meeting took note of the programme for 2007-2009, as well as the workplan for the period 2008-2009 (see A/AC.105/894), which will be implemented by the three UN-SPIDER offices, in Beijing, Bonn and Vienna, and the Liaison Office in Geneva. The implementation of UN-SPIDER will be supported by a network of regional support offices and national focal points. The Meeting noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs would coordinate with other United Nations entities in the implementation of the planned activities, cooperating in particular with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction within the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and with the United Nations Development Programme in the definition of national risk reduction and disaster management plans and policies.

F. Participation of the entities of the United Nations system in the process of the Group on Earth Observations

34. The Meeting noted the report of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Office for Outer Space Affairs on the participation of the United Nations entities in the process of GEO and GEOSS. It also took note of the joint statement by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), including its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), and WMO and the statement of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, both made at the GEO Ministerial Summit, held in Cape Town on 30 November 2007.

35. The Meeting noted that the WMO report on the fourth plenary session of GEO on 28 and 29 November 2007 and the subsequent Ministerial Summit referred to the Inter-agency Coordination and Planning Committee (ICPC), comprising FAO, UNESCO/IOC, UNEP, WMO and the non-governmental International Council for Science. It also noted that ICPC had encouraged the inclusion of other United Nations organizations that had programmes and systems that would contribute to GEO objectives. In that context, the Meeting requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs, as the secretariat of the Meeting, to approach WMO with a view to clarifying the terms of reference and the procedure for becoming a member of ICPC and to inform the members of the Inter-Agency Meeting.

36. The Meeting agreed that, as the primary coordination mechanism of the United Nations system in space-related activities, it provided an excellent platform for consultations with respect to GEO/GEOSS activities and invited United Nations entities to report to the Meeting on such activities.

37. The Meeting noted that UNSDI had been recognized in the declaration approved by ministers at the GEO Ministerial Summit in Cape Town and that it

³ See <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/unspider/index.html>.

provided an additional avenue for collaboration between United Nations entities and GEO.

G. Public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches in the United Nations system to promote the use of space technology and its applications

38. The Meeting noted that, as part of its outreach efforts to engage in dialogue with Member States, the theme of its fifth open informal session for exchange of information between the representatives of United Nations entities and the representatives of Member States would be “Public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches in the United Nations system to promote the use of space technology and its applications”. The focal points of the Inter-Agency Meeting had agreed on that topic in view of the new agenda item on the subject. The Meeting finalized the agenda of the open informal session (see annex III).

H. Public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation

39. The Office for Outer Space Affairs briefed the Meeting on the continued improvements in the website for the United Nations Coordination of Outer Space Activities. The Meeting agreed on the need to further enhance the website as a tool to publicize and promote inter-agency cooperation and coordination.

40. The Meeting agreed that the focal points of the Meeting should provide the Office for Outer Space Affairs on a regular basis with updated information on their space-related programmes and activities, including relevant website addresses and upcoming activities, for posting on the site.

41. The Meeting heard a presentation by ITU on the inter-agency web discussion board.⁴ The Meeting assessed the usefulness of the board in view of the function already provided by the website for the United Nations Coordination of Outer Space Activities. The Meeting agreed to encourage use of the board by United Nations entities with a view to re-assessing its usefulness during the intersessional period and to decide, at its next session, whether to retain or discontinue the board.

42. The Meeting noted with appreciation that the brochure entitled “Space solutions for the world’s problems: how the United Nations family uses space technology for achieving development goals” prepared by the Office for Outer Space Affairs had been produced in Arabic, English, French and Spanish and was also available in electronic format on the website for the United Nations Coordination of Outer Space Activities. The Meeting agreed that the current content of the brochure would remain valid for at least two years and decided to review the brochure at its thirtieth session, in 2010.

⁴ <http://www.itu.int/jive/index.jspa?categoryID=176>.

III. Other matters

Future programme of work

43. As part of its discussions on means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation, the Meeting considered its current reporting structure and schedule of annual meetings and agreed on the desirability of reporting to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and of shifting the dates of its annual meetings closer to the sessions of the Committee.

44. The Meeting also agreed that decisions on the agenda items for the twenty-ninth session would be made during the intersessional period, in consultation with the Chairman and with the approval of the members of the Inter-Agency Meeting.

45. Participants expressed their appreciation to UNOSAT for hosting the twenty-eighth session of the Meeting in Geneva. The Meeting noted with appreciation the efforts made by the secretariat to strengthen the impact of the contribution of the Meeting to enhancing inter-agency cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system.

46. The Meeting recalled its agreement that the venue of the annual sessions should alternate between Vienna and other cities, and noted that its twenty-ninth session would be hosted by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in Vienna in 2009.

47. The Meeting accepted with appreciation the offer made by ITU to host the thirtieth session in Geneva in 2010.

Annex I

List of participants at the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 16 to 18 January 2008

Chairman: F. Pisano (United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Applications Programme)

Secretary: N. Hedman (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

Assistant Secretaries: W. Balogh (Office for Outer Space Affairs)
J. Gaziyeu (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

United Nations Secretariat

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat	P. Basabe Y. Ono
Office for Outer Space Affairs	M. Othman D. Stevens
Economic Commission for Africa	A. Nonguierma
Economic Commission for Europe	B. Wachs

United Nations programmes and funds

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	K. Steinacker L. St-Pierre
United Nations Environment Programme	R. Witt
United Nations Institute for Training and Research/United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme	F. Pisano E. Bjorgo O. Van Damme

Specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Y. Berenguer
International Atomic Energy Agency	D. Delattre
International Telecommunication Union	V. Timofeev Y. Henri A. Matas
World Meteorological Organization	R. Francis

Annex II

Agenda for the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 16 to 18 January 2008

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of the Chairman.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2007-2008;
 - (c) Preparation of a report on initiatives and applications for space-related inter-agency cooperation;
 - (d) Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities.
5. Space-related outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
6. Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
7. Use by the United Nations of the Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters by the United Nations system and methods to increase operational collaboration in the use of space technology in emergency response.
8. Lessons learned and good practices in the use of space technologies for relief efforts and disaster reduction.
9. Participation of the entities of the United Nations system in the process of the Group on Earth Observations.
10. Public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches in the United Nations system to promote the use of space technology and its applications.
11. Public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation.
12. Other matters.

Annex III

Agenda for the open informal session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva on 18 January 2008

Theme: “Public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches in the United Nations system to promote the use of space technology and its applications”

Introductory remarks	Chairman of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities
Introduction of participants	All participants
Presentations on public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches in the United Nations system to promote the use of space technology and its applications	
- Activities of the Office for Outer Space Affairs related to public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches	Office for Outer Space Affairs
- Public-private partnerships in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat
- Example of public-private partnerships in the framework of the African Geodetic Reference Frame project	Economic Commission for Africa
- Framework for partnership within the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/United Nations Geographic Information Working Group
- Public-private partnerships and innovative funding approaches employed by United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme	United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Applications Programme
Summary of issues of interest and concern to the United Nations entities and members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space	Chairman of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities
Discussions among United Nations entities and member States of the Committee and concluding remarks	