

Japan, Item 14 – “General exchange of views on the application of international law to small satellite activities”

---

Madam Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Small satellites can be developed and manufactured at low costs by using relatively simple technology. They can be utilized in various areas, from educational purposes to technology demonstration, communication, and remote sensing, and have the potential to meet increasing demands of space technologies in various countries. With these characteristics, small satellites can provide emerging spacefaring nations good opportunities to build their capacity in the utilization of space.

The Japanese Experiment Module “Kibo” of the International Space Station (ISS) with the unique capability of an airlock system and a robotic arm, is capable of deploying small satellites. The first deployment of CubeSats from Kibo was successfully conducted in October 2012. Since then, small satellites from Japan as well as from various countries’ educational or research institutions from around the world have been deployed from Kibo. A distinct advantage of deploying small satellites from the ISS compared to a direct launch by a launch vehicle is that it could mitigate launch requirements due to the lower vibration environment during the launch, therefore lowering the threshold of space activities.

For years, Japan has been cooperating with UNOOSA to promote a UN-Japan collaborative program known as “KiboCUBE”. Launched in September 2015 as a capacity-building initiative between the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and UNOOSA, the KiboCUBE program offers educational or research institutions from developing countries the opportunity to deploy CubeSats from Kibo. So far, CubeSats developed by teams from Kenya and Guatemala have been deployed from Kibo, and the experience and technology acquired from the development of these CubeSats are expected to be applied to the development of future satellites in both countries.

CubeSats developed by teams from Mauritius, Indonesia, Moldova, and SICA, which were selected for the third, fourth and fifth round of KiboCUBE, will follow these missions. For this fiscal year, a CubeSat named MIR-SAT1, developed by a team from the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council and the winner of the third round of KiboCUBE, was successfully deployed from Kibo. This was Mauritius’ first satellite, and the experience of development and operation of MIR-SAT1, such as image acquisition and communication demonstration, is expected to benefit future space activities in Mauritius.

Recognizing that KiboCUBE has become an essential tool for capacity building, UNOOSA and JAXA announced the extension of the program until the end of December 2024, adding a new educational opportunity named “KiboCUBE Academy” to the program. Currently, two entities in Mexico and Tunisia were selected for the sixth round of KiboCUBE announced during an online side event held during the 59th Session of Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of COPUOS.

Japan has been conducting small satellite activities in accordance with international norms. For example, Japan established the “Manual Pertaining to the Notification for Registering Space Objects” in 2018. As for space debris mitigation, the “*Act on Launching of Spacecraft, etc. and Control of Spacecraft*” refers to space debris mitigation measures, which are specified in the license requirements for the control of a spacecraft.

We hope to promote responsible small satellite utilization through these endeavors, and are ready to contribute to the discussion on the legal aspects of these activities under this agenda item.

Thank you for your kind attention.