

A/C.1/PV.1821

(Mr. Labode, Czechoslovakia)

As to the question which in the future should set priority in the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Czechoslovak delegation has favoured for years the question of the definition of the utilization of outer space, the question of principles governing man's activities on the surface of the moon and other celestial bodies and, last but not least, the question of the usefulness of elaborating legal principles on which the creation and functioning of space communication should be based.

Taking into consideration the recent developments and the achievements in the exploration of our natural satellite, we are happy to support the high priority for the proposed international treaty concerning the moon. The Soviet initiative offers a more detailed legal framework than that existing now for man's activities in the lunar environment. The basic objective ought to be the internationalization of the moon.

The draft treaty concerning the moon endeavours to concretize and complement further the existing system of the so-called outer space treaties, especially the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, of 1967 and the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space of 1968. In the interest of the peaceful uses of the moon, its interior and space around the moon, it is necessary to elaborate an all-round treaty concerning the moon. Therefore, the text prepared by the Soviet delegation takes over also some provisions of the aforementioned treaties containing mostly more comprehensive and general formulations. The draft treaty concerning the moon makes those provisions more specific and complements them by a number of new principles and rules. It is not a different regulation of the already valid general principles and norms.

The Czechoslovak delegation assesses the draft treaty concerning the moon as a good basis for further negotiations, as a useful document reflecting the present phase reached in the exploration of the moon. This phase already makes it imperative to establish new legal rules for the activities of States exploring the moon, as well as for further fruitful co-operation of States in

A/C.1/PV.1821

R.10

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the utilization in the interest of peace and for the benefit of all mankind.

It is in the urgent interest of friendly relations and co-operation among States that the new norms of international law should foster such co-operation and prevent antagonism or sources of potential doubts or even international disputes.

The Czechoslovak delegation shares the view that the United Nations General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session should uphold the idea of the draft treaty concerning the moon and should entrust the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to consider and elaborate this treaty.

May I be permitted at the conclusion of my statement, since I had no opportunity to do so before, to express on behalf of the Czechoslovak delegation my deep and sincere sympathy to the delegation of India in connection with the natural calamity which recently afflicted the eastern coast of its country and resulted in the tragic loss of thousands of human lives and immense material damage.

Mr. MTT (Australia): In this discussion of outer space matters we are considering two items, the annual item dealing with international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space and a new item submitted by the Soviet Union entitled "Preparation of an international treaty concerning the moon". In this general statement today I would like to explain my delegation's views on the main developments under the heading of "Outer Space" in the year under review and to make some comments on future activity.

The report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in document A/DXO, which the Chairman of the Committee introduced to us on 4 November, indicates that the Committee has made progress in several directions this year in its task of promoting international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space. Without doubt, the main achievement was the agreement to adopt and send forward to the Assembly a draft convention on international liability for damage caused by space objects. We feel that it would now be appropriate for the General Assembly to commend the convention to governments for signature and ratification.

While welcoming the draft convention, however, we are bound to add that certain of its provisions represent hard-won compromises which probably are not fully satisfactory to any delegation which took part in the process of negotiation.