

UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON PEACEFUL USE OF OUTER SPACE



STUDY GUIDE



**UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON
PEACEFUL USE OF OUTER SPACE**

AGENDA:
**ADDRESSING THE ADEQUACY OF INTERNATIONAL
LEGAL FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING OUTER SPACE
WITH RESPECT TO COMMERCIAL SPACE
EXPLORATIONS NON TRADITIONAL SPACE ACTORS**

INDEX:

1. Letter from the Executive Board
2. About the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space
3. Timeline
4. Legal framework
5. Overview of the agenda
6. Rise of commercial space activity
7. Non- Traditional Actors
8. Ongoing processes at UNCOPUOS
9. Parallel and competing frameworks
10. Case Studies
11. Key terminologies
12. Paperwork Guide
13. Citations



LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD:

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS), at Sri Sri Academy Model United Nations, 2026. The agenda for the session is “Addressing the adequacy of International Legal Frameworks governing outer space with respect to commercial space explorations and non- traditional space actors.”

This study guide is by no means the end of research, we would very much appreciate it if the members are able to find new realms in the agenda and bring it forth in the committee. Such research combined with good argumentation and a solid representation of facts is what makes an excellent performance.

In the session, the Executive Board will encourage you to speak as much as possible, because for us, fluency, diction, or oratory skills have very little importance as opposed to the content you deliver. We are certain that we will be learning from you immensely and we also hope that you all will have an equally enriching experience. In case of any queries feel free to contact us. We will try to answer the questions to the best of our abilities. We look forward to an exciting and interesting committee.

For any queries/clarifications/enquires, email at

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With regards,
Swapnaneel Datta
(Chairperson)

Vidushi Kedia
(Vice Chairperson)

Atharv Aggarwal
(Director)

Rachit Goenka
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ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE:

Establishment:

The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS) was established on 13th December, 1958, under the provisions of the Resolution 1348 (XIII) as an ad-hoc committee. Later, in the 856th plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1472 (XIV) was adopted by the General Assembly, and the mandate of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was reaffirmed, and its status was reconsidered. Under the provisions of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1472 (XIV), the concerned committee was officially transitioned into a permanent body under the United Nations General Assembly. There were 24 original members of this body, who are as follows: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, United States of America, United Kingdom, India, Iran, Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Sweden, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Japan, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, and the United Arab Republic.

This committee was formed as a direct result of the desire of the United Nations to maintain peace not only on Earth, but beyond, and as far as outer space. Ever since the first man-made satellite circled the Earth in 1957, a possibility of conflict couldn't be ignored. Mankind made developments in reaching out to space, and had sent humans to space. A war on Earth could hamper the discovery and advancements made by the entirety of mankind in space, and a war in space could have harmed mankind on Earth. Therefore, to protect the interest of mankind, and to serve humanity, the United Nations General Assembly proposed the creation of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Membership and Structure:

As per Resolution 1472 of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space composed of 24

members, as listed previously. Currently, the committee has 104 member states. Specific protocols exist through which a new member state may be admitted into the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The willing state must first submit an official request to the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs. The UNOOSA reviews the request. The request is then forwarded to the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. Lastly, a draft resolution is formed, is subjected to voting, and if adopted the willing state is admitted as a new member of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

This committee has two standing sub committees, the Legal Subcommittee and the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, their main functions are as follows:

- 1. Legal Subcommittee:** Focuses on the legal framework governing the exploration of Outer Space, and is responsible for the implementation of The Outer Space Treaty (1967), The Rescue Agreement (1968), The Liability Convention (1972), The Registration Convention (1975) and The Moon Agreement (adopted in 1979) (collectively known as the 5 UN Treaties). This committee also deliberates upon the definition and delimitation of Outer Space, utilisation of the resources of spaces, and the mechanisms for registering various space objects.
- 2. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee:** This subcommittee focuses on the scientific and technical aspects of space exploration, and deliberates upon various scientific methods as well as aspects as applicable for various agendas.

Both of these committees have dedicated 'Working Groups' which address particular agendas.

Any decision of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is to be made by consensus and not by formal voting.

Mandate, Scope of Working, and Responsibilities:

This body is expected to perform the following functions:

- 1. Promoting International Cooperation:** Promotes international cooperation, and joint research and missions towards space exploration. This is the primary function which shall directly result in peaceful exploration of space, and ultimately the improvement of mankind itself.
- 2. Developing International Law and Legal Frameworks Concerned with the Peaceful Exploration of Space:** Appropriate internationally recognised legal framework is the key to maintaining lasting peace in space. This committee is responsible for the creation of more such international frameworks, and the implementation of pre-existing legal frameworks.
- 3. Utilising Space for Global Development and Advanced Space Sustainability:** This committee ensures that space, its resources and peaceful exploration is directed towards the growth of mankind on Earth. This committee is also tasked with limiting human debris in space, and other tasks like managing space traffic in the future.

This body has multiple responsibilities as well. It has to make sure that all developments in space are sustainable. It is tasked with assessing various developments in space and potential threats activities in space may pose to mankind. As stated previously, it is also responsible for implementing and creating legal frameworks pertaining to outer space and its usage along with exploration.

Note: All decisions taken by the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space are by total consensus of all member states.

Powers and Limitations on the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space:

Powers:

1. Creates guidelines for all activities conducted in space.
2. It holds immense value as it is the only internationally recognised body where 100+ sovereign members, commercial agencies, and NGOs meet to deliberate upon space governing.

Sri Sri Academy, Model United Nations 2026

3. Through its secretariat (UNOOSA), it maintains the UN Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space. This serves as a vital transparency tool to keep track of political and military payloads launched into orbit.

Limitations:

1. The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space cannot pass binding decisions and force any guideline.
2. The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is established strictly for peaceful purposes, and may not authorise the usage of force in space.



TIMELINE:

(The timeline is only a brief recounting of events that lead up to the current situation. It does not cover everything.)

October 4, 1957: The Soviet Union launches Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite, triggering global anxiety that outer space could become a new, unregulated area for military and political rivalry between the US and USSR.

1958: Consequently, the UN General Assembly creates an ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in order to analyze how international cooperation in space could be organized before rival powers set unilateral precedents.

December 12, 1959: The UN General Assembly formally establishes the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS) as a permanent body, assigned with the role of reviewing international cooperation in space and drafting legal principles to govern it.

1961-1962: UNCOPUOS creates its two permanent subsidiary bodies, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee. Their work is divided between technical space science matters and legal/regulatory questions.

1963: The UN General Assembly adopts the Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, laying the political groundwork for a binding treaty.

January 27, 1967: The Outer Space Treaty (OST) is opened for signature, establishing that space is free for exploration by all states and thus it cannot be claimed as national territory. Moreover it also mentions that states bear international responsibility for national space activities including those of private entities operating under their jurisdiction (Article VI).

April 22, 1968: The Rescue Agreement is adopted, obligating states to assist and help the astronauts in times of distress and return objects launched into space to their owning state.

March 29, 1972: The Liability Convention is adopted, establishing that a "launching state" is liable for the damages caused by its space objects. This thus

places the responsibility on states even when the underlying activity is carried out by a private company.

1974: The Registration Convention is adopted, requiring states to maintain an account of objects they launch into space, reinforcing state-centric accountability at a time when only governments were realistically capable of reaching orbit.

December 18, 1979: The Moon Agreement is adopted, introducing the "common heritage of mankind" principle for celestial bodies and their resources. However, it failed to attract major spacefaring states as signatories, and to this day remains largely unratified by the world's actual space powers, hence signaling the limits of binding treaty-making in this domain.

1980s: With no further binding treaty gaining traction, UNCOPUOS's working style begins shifting toward adopting non-binding declarations and principles rather than new treaties, as consensus-based binding law-making proves increasingly difficult among a growing and more divided membership.

1984: The UN adopts the non-binding Broadcasting Principles and later the Remote Sensing Principles (1986), reflecting this new preference for soft-law instruments over treaties.

Late 1980s - 1990s: The end of the Cold War lowers superpower urgency around space governance, but a new trend quietly begins: private companies start entering the launch and satellite services market on a commercial basis, initially through government contracts (e.g., commercial communications satellites, private launch service providers).

1996: UNCOPUOS adopts the Declaration on International Cooperation on the exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all states, an early attempt to formally acknowledge developing states' interests in the growing space economy.

2004: SpaceShipOne completes the first privately funded human spaceflight, marking a symbolic turning point where a non-state, non-traditional actor demonstrates independent access to space.

2008: NASA's Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS) program begins funding private companies (including SpaceX) to develop cargo delivery

capability to the International Space Station, formally legitimizing commercial actors as space infrastructure partners rather than mere contractors.

2015: The United States passes the Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act, explicitly granting US companies rights to own and sell space resources they extract. It is a unilateral national law addressing a gap the Moon Agreement had left unresolved internationally.

2017: Following USA's path. Luxembourg passes its own national space resources law, further fragmenting the international legal landscape by creating competing national frameworks rather than a unified global one.

2019: SpaceX begins deploying its Starlink satellite constellation, marking the beginning of the "mega-constellation" era and raising urgent, previously theoretical concerns about orbital congestion, space debris, and the sheer scale at which a private company can now operate in orbit.

October 13, 2020: The United States and seven other founding nations sign the Artemis Accords, a set of principles for lunar and space exploration developed outside the UN framework. As it is non-UN and led primarily by the US, it becomes controversial and is even seen by some as a parallel or competing track to UNCOPUOS's own multilateral process.

2020-2021: Space tourism becomes operational, with Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin conducting the first fully privately crewed suborbital flights, extending "non-traditional actor" status to include paying private citizens.

2022: UNCOPUOS's Legal Subcommittee establishes the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities, formally beginning multilateral negotiations on how space resource extraction (asteroid/lunar mining) should be governed. This was the first sustained UN effort to address the gap left by the Moon Agreement's failure.

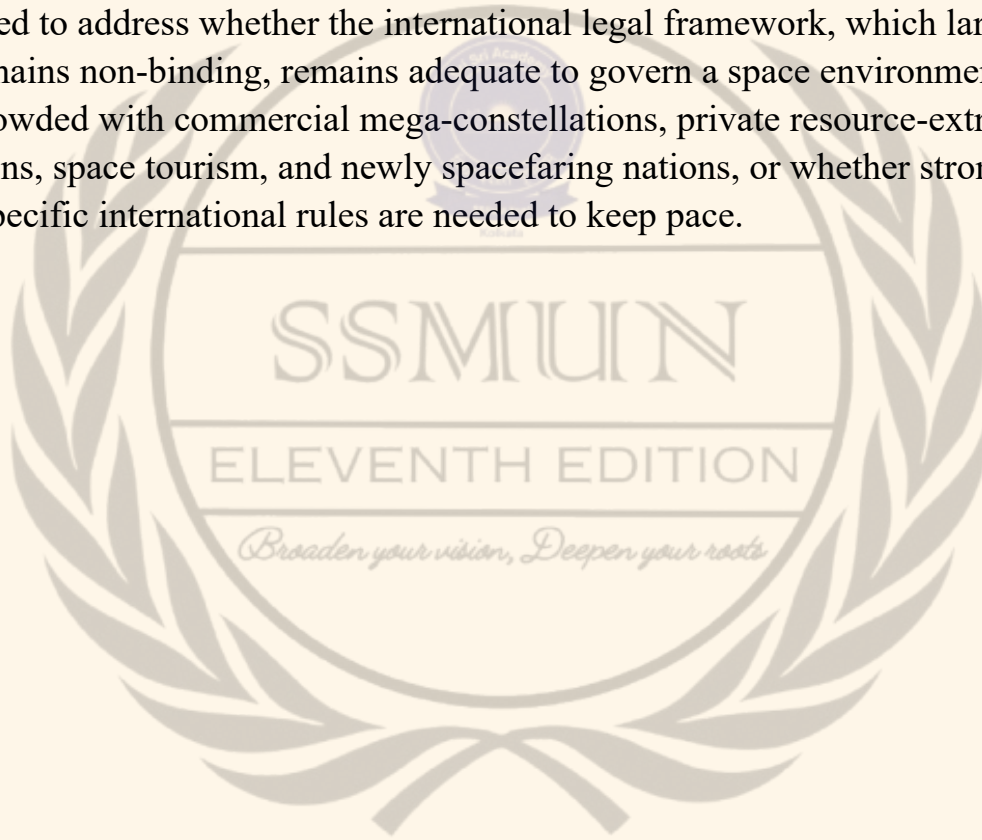
2023-2024: Private lunar landers attempt Moon landings under commercial, not purely governmental, missions, further blurring the line between state and private space activity.

March-December 2025: The Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities releases four successive drafts of its Recommended Principles on Space Resource Activities, with each version reinforcing that the

eventual text will be a non-binding guidance instrument rather than a binding treaty, continuing the post-1979 trend of favoring soft law.

April 2026: More countries join the Artemis Accords, and the Legal Subcommittee holds its 65th session with member states explicitly stating that the current legal framework is adequate in structure and that no new binding treaty is necessary, while also pushing for greater private-sector input into UNCOPUOS's process.

Present day: The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has now convened to address whether the international legal framework, which largely still remains non-binding, remains adequate to govern a space environment now crowded with commercial mega-constellations, private resource-extraction ambitions, space tourism, and newly spacefaring nations, or whether stronger, more specific international rules are needed to keep pace.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

The international legal architecture governing outer space rests upon five principal instruments negotiated between 1967 and 1979, collectively termed the "five UN space treaties", though their binding authority and contemporary relevance remain deeply contested. This framework emerged in the specific Cold War context of the 1960s and early 1970s, when space activity remained the exclusive domain of sovereign states with advanced industrial and military capacity.

The Outer Space Treaty, 1967

The Outer Space Treaty (OST) remains the foundational instrument, ratified by 117 states as of June 2026. Its critical substantive provisions are:

Article I establishes that the exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, shall be the "province of all mankind", with activities benefiting all countries regardless of their degree of economic or scientific development. This formulation creates an aspirational principle of universal benefit without establishing enforceable mechanisms to distribute space-derived gains equitably.

Article II provides the non-appropriation principle: outer space, celestial bodies, and their resources cannot become the subject of national appropriation "by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means". The Article neither permits nor explicitly prohibits resource extraction and appropriation by private entities, creating interpretive ambiguity that persists today. The Article does not address whether extracted resources become appropriable once removed from their celestial source, a gap that 21st-century commercial resource activities have exposed.

Article VI places responsibility on states for both governmental and non-governmental space activities: "The activities of non-governmental entities in outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, shall require authorisation and continuing supervision by the appropriate State Party to the Treaty." This provision establishes a state-mediated accountability model wherein private companies operate under state jurisdiction, but states retain primary international responsibility. Critically, the Article does not define "continuing supervision", does not establish minimum standards for state

oversight, and does not create mechanisms for international enforcement if a state licenses private activity that violates treaty obligations.

Articles VII and VIII establish state liability for space object damage and the right of states to recover space objects launched from their territory. These provisions presume state ownership and control, creating ambiguity about corporate liability when private companies operate space objects.

The Rescue Agreement, 1968

The Rescue and Return Agreement obligates all parties to render emergency assistance to astronauts and spacecraft in distress, establishing reciprocal rescue obligations independent of nationality or spacecraft nationality. Its contemporary relevance has diminished given modern spacecraft design and communication capabilities, though it retains symbolic importance.

The Liability Convention, 1972

The Liability Convention establishes that the "launching State" (defined as the state that launches, procures the launching, or provides territory or facilities for launching) bears liability for damage caused by its space objects on Earth's surface or in airspace. This instrument operationalises the responsibility principle established in Article VI of the OST but creates critical ambiguity regarding private liability: if a private company licensed by a state launches a satellite that causes damage, the state remains liable despite having minimal operational control.

The Registration Convention, 1975

The Registration Convention requires states to maintain registries of objects they launch and to report these to the UN Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space. This convention presumes a one-to-one correspondence between state launchers and registered objects, becoming increasingly problematic as private companies operate multiple satellites on behalf of different customers. The convention does not address registries of commercial mega-constellations, where a single entity may operate hundreds or thousands of satellites simultaneously.

The Moon Agreement, 1979

The Moon Agreement introduced the principle of the "common heritage of mankind", designating the Moon and its resources as collective human property not subject to national appropriation. The Agreement establishes that exploitation of lunar resources shall occur under international regime governance to be negotiated multilaterally, and mandates benefit sharing with developing states. However, none of the major spacefaring powers ratified the Agreement: the United States, Russia, China, Japan, the European Space Agency members, and India remain non-parties. This non-ratification reflects fundamental disagreement over whether celestial resources should be subject to international collective governance or national/private extraction rights.

Soft Law Instruments and Guidelines

Following the Moon Agreement's failure to achieve consensus among spacefaring powers, UNCOPUOS shifted toward non-binding soft law instruments. The 1982 "Principles Governing the Use by States of Artificial Earth Satellites for International Direct Television Broadcasting" and the 1986 "Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Space" established precedent for consensus-based guidelines rather than binding treaties. The 2019 "Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities", adopted by consensus at the 62nd session of UNCOPUOS, establish non-binding recommendations for orbital debris mitigation, space situational awareness, collision avoidance procedures, and end-of-life disposal. However, these guidelines create no enforcement mechanisms and remain aspirational rather than obligatory.

The Artemis Accords as Parallel Framework

Initiated outside UN processes in October 2020, the Artemis Accords represent a coalition-based alternative to multilateral treaty-making. The Accords establish principles including "safety zones" around lunar operations, establishing exclusive operational areas in which signatory states and their authorised entities can operate without external interference. Critics argue that "safety zones" function as de facto territorial appropriation by another name, circumventing Article II's prohibition on national appropriation. The Accords are framed as consistent with the OST, yet this consistency claim remains contested, particularly regarding the operational scope of safety zones and whether their establishment constitutes implicit territorial claims. As of September 2026, 72

states had signed the Accords, fragmenting the legal landscape between Accords signatories and non-signatories.

National Legislation and Regulatory Fragmentation

The United States Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act of 2015 granted US companies property rights to resources extracted from celestial bodies, explicitly permitting US private companies to own and sell asteroid or lunar materials. This unilateral assertion of extraction rights directly contradicts the Moon Agreement's common heritage principle and challenges Article II's non-appropriation language. Luxembourg (2017), the United Arab Emirates (2019), and Japan (2021) subsequently enacted similar national space resource laws. This legislative proliferation creates regulatory arbitrage opportunities: private companies can select jurisdictions with permissive extraction regimes, undermining potential international consensus on resource governance. The absence of binding international agreement on extraction rights permits states to establish conflicting claims simultaneously.

Gaps and Inadequacies in the Contemporary Framework

The existing legal architecture addresses state-to-state accountability but not private corporate accountability. Private companies operate under state licenses, yet the framework does not establish binding standards for state licensing decisions, ongoing supervision intensity, or enforcement mechanisms when licensed private activity causes international harm. The framework presumes low orbital activity density and limited space debris production, yet mega-constellations with thousands of satellites generate unprecedented debris volumes and collision risks. No binding mechanism exists to compel mega-constellation operators to implement space traffic management measures or debris mitigation protocols. The framework addresses appropriation of territory but not resource extraction rights, creating a regulatory vacuum that national legislation has filled with mutually conflicting rules. No dispute resolution mechanism exists within UNCOPUOS itself: disagreements over treaty interpretation flow to the International Court of Justice, which has never addressed space law questions.

OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA:

Rise of Commercial Space Activity: Periodisation and Structural Transformation

Commercial space activity emerged not as a revolutionary disruption of state monopoly but as gradual state-enabled commercialisation, wherein governments retained fundamental control over access infrastructure whilst permitting private entities to operate satellites and services within state-licensed frameworks. This evolution proceeded through distinct structural phases.

Phase One: Foundation and Proof-of-Concept (1962-1969)

The Communications Satellite Act of 1962 established COMSAT, a public-private corporation wherein the US government maintained 50 percent ownership and the Federal Communications Commission retained regulatory authority. Simultaneously, COMSAT acquired 50 percent of Intelsat, the International Telecommunications Satellite Organisation. This structure created controlled commercialisation: private capital and operational expertise served government foreign policy objectives. The Telstar 1 satellite's 1962 transatlantic transmission demonstrated technological feasibility whilst remaining under government control. Intelsat's Early Bird satellite (1965) operationalised international telecommunications via satellite, generating commercial revenue whilst maintaining government ownership stakes and FCC regulatory oversight. The Soviet Intersputnik network (1967) mirrored this model: state ownership and control with commercial service provision. This phase established the principle that space infrastructure could generate economic returns whilst remaining under state governance authority.

Phase Two: Market Expansion and Competitive Infrastructure (1970-1979)

This period witnessed expansion of satellite-based commercial services (telecommunications, broadcasting, Earth observation) without expansion of launch infrastructure. Launch remained a state monopoly: only the United States (NASA), Soviet Union (Baikonur), and China possessed orbital launch capabilities. This asymmetry meant that commercial satellite operators depended entirely upon government launch access, creating bottlenecks that limited expansion. Arianespace's establishment in 1980 marked the transition beyond this phase, yet even Arianespace remained 70 percent state-owned through French, German, and Belgian government shareholding. Private commercial operators

could lease satellite capacity and launch services, but infrastructure ownership and access remained fundamentally state-controlled.

Phase Three: Commercialised Infrastructure and Divergent Models (1980-2003)

China's 1985 introduction of Long March rocket commercial launch services created the first non-Western state actor competing in commercial launch markets. The Soviet Union's eventual collapse eliminated a major state infrastructure provider without displacing commercial models. By 2000, commercial satellite operators outnumbered government satellites in Earth orbit. However, launch infrastructure remained limited to three state actors (US, Russia, China), each maintaining political control over launch licenses and pricing. SpaceX's founding in 2002 and its first development contract with the US Department of Defense in 2006 began altering this structure, yet SpaceX operated within contractual relationships to government customers rather than independent commercial markets. Venture capital investment in space companies remained modest, with dominant investors being government contracts rather than private equity.

Phase Four: Capital-Driven Infrastructure Disruption (2008-Present)

This phase represents fundamental structural transformation, driven by venture capital investment exceeding state launch monopolies' maintenance and marginal cost pricing. SpaceX's Falcon 9 development, NASA's Commercial Orbital Transportation Services program (commencing 2008), and subsequent reusable rocket technologies fundamentally altered launch economics. Where traditional expendable rockets cost \$50,000-\$65,000 per kilogram to Low Earth Orbit (LEO), SpaceX's Falcon 9 reusable first stage achieved marginal costs of \$10,000-\$15,000 per kilogram by 2015 and \$5,000-\$8,000 by 2022. This cost reduction enabled mega-constellations: SpaceX's Starlink constellation deployed nearly 6,000 satellites by 2026, compared to approximately 8,000 total satellites launched in the entire prior 60 years of space activity.

Venture capital investment in commercial space companies reached \$8.9 billion globally in 2021, with Isar Aerospace raising \$200 million in Series B funding (2023) to develop low-cost European launch infrastructure. LandSpace, backed by Chinese venture capital exceeding \$500 million, deployed the Zhuque-2 methalox rocket, eliminating the cost penalties of traditional kerosene-based

propulsion. Blue Origin, backed by Jeff Bezos' personal capital exceeding \$10 billion, developed multiple launch platforms and lunar lander capabilities competing against government space agencies.

This phase introduced non-governmental entities capable of independent infrastructure development, capital mobilisation without state contracts, and technological iteration speeds exceeding government programmes. Private companies began conducting human spaceflight (Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin, SpaceX), space tourism operations, asteroid exploration proposals, and lunar lander development without government contracts as primary revenue sources.

Non-Traditional Actors: Definition, Scale, and Governance Implications

"Non-traditional space actors" encompasses private corporations, non-governmental entities, and commercial ventures operating satellites, launch services, space tourism, and resource extraction activities. This category excludes government space agencies and international governmental organisations. However, this definition obscures heterogeneity: vertically integrated launch providers (SpaceX, Blue Origin, Isar Aerospace) operate qualitatively differently from satellite operators (Planet Labs, Maxar Technologies) or service providers (Axiom Space, Orbital Reef). Their collective scale has become consequential: by 2026, private companies operated approximately 70 percent of all operational satellites in orbit, yet remained subject to fragmented national regulatory frameworks rather than binding international standards.

The Accountability Gap: State Responsibility versus Private Corporate Scale

The Outer Space Treaty's Article VI establishes that states bear international responsibility for private space activities authorised and supervised by them. This creates a principal-agent relationship wherein states license private activity and bear resulting liability for treaty violations. Several structural problems have emerged:

First, states have provided minimal formal definition of "continuing supervision". The United States licenses commercial launch providers through the Federal Aviation Administration's Office of Commercial Space Transportation, which grants licenses for launch vehicles and payload operations. Licenses typically require insurance against third-party liability, operational plans, environmental

compliance, and periodic reporting. However, no binding international standard defines the adequacy of these oversight mechanisms. Luxembourg's 2017 space resources law established merely that the state's Office of Space Affairs would "authorise" resource extraction activities, with minimal specification of ongoing supervision mechanisms.

Second, the scale of private activity has exceeded government capacity for meaningful oversight. SpaceX's Starlink constellation operates 5,864 satellites (as of August 2026) under US Federal Communications Commission licensing. The FCC theoretically maintains continuing supervision, yet this supervision operates primarily through post-launch licence compliance verification rather than real-time operational control. When Starlink satellites experience technical malfunctions or execute unplanned orbital manoeuvres creating debris risks, the FCC's capacity to compel remediation remains unclear. The liability convention presumes limited numbers of discrete satellites; mega-constellations with thousands of simultaneous orbital objects exceed the framework's operational assumptions.

Third, regulatory arbitrage has emerged: private companies can select licensing jurisdictions offering permissive licensing standards. A satellite manufacturer might register in Luxembourg for resource extraction operations, lease launch services from a launch provider licensed in Singapore, and operate through ground stations licensed in the United Arab Emirates, creating fragmented jurisdictional responsibility. No international mechanism aggregates these scattered regulatory responsibilities into coherent accountability.

Fourth, private companies' operational capabilities have exceeded government capacity for enforcement. When a private space company launches an orbital object that fails to de-orbit as promised, creating long-term debris hazards, the licensing state's enforcement mechanisms typically involve contractual penalties with the company rather than international enforcement. The International Court of Justice provides a dispute resolution mechanism, yet only states are parties to ICJ proceedings; private companies cannot be sued directly. A company backed by sufficient capital can absorb contractual penalties exceeding governmental capacity to compel compliance through other mechanisms.

Non-Appropriation Principle under Pressure from Resource Extraction

The Outer Space Treaty's Article II's non-appropriation principle presumes that space activities concern transportation, communications, and research—not resource extraction and ownership. As commercial interest in asteroid mining and lunar resource extraction has intensified, the principle's application has become contested. Four interpretive positions have emerged:

One interpretation holds that Article II prohibits all appropriation of celestial bodies themselves but not extracted resources. Once a company removes lunar regolith, asteroid metals, or water ice from their celestial source, these extracted materials become appropriable because they no longer exist in situ on a prohibited celestial body. This interpretation underlies US, Luxembourg, and Japanese national space resources legislation.

A second interpretation argues that Article II encompasses extracted resources as well: appropriating extracted resources constitutes an indirect claim of sovereignty over the celestial body itself, rendering the extraction activity prohibited. This interpretation underlies the Moon Agreement and commands support among developing nations and some developed states. However, these states lack enforcement mechanisms against non-parties engaging in extraction.

A third interpretation distinguishes between ownership and extraction rights: states and private entities may extract resources for utilisation in space (in-situ resource utilisation), but cannot transport extracted resources to Earth for terrestrial sale and profit, as this would constitute appropriation. This interpretation seeks to permit resource use for space settlement and exploration whilst preventing the common heritage principle's circumvention through commercial extraction.

A fourth interpretation, articulated by the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, maintains that all space resource activities require multilateral governance through UNCOPUOS before any extraction occurs. This interpretation permits no unilateral national legislation governing extraction and rejects the non-binding Artemis Accords' "safety zones" approach as appropriation by stealth.

These conflicting interpretations create genuine legal uncertainty: a private company might invest \$1 billion in lunar mining infrastructure under US or Luxembourg legal authority, only to face international challenges to its operational legitimacy from non-party nations or UNCOPUOS consensus-based

opposition. No binding mechanism exists to resolve this interpretive ambiguity before destructive resource extraction occurs.

Mega-Constellation Era: Collision Cascades and Space Sustainability

SpaceX's Starlink deployment initiated the "mega-constellation era", wherein single operators control thousands of satellites simultaneously. This scale transformation creates unprecedented orbital congestion and collision risks. At current deployment rates, LEO contains approximately 27,500 tracked objects larger than 10 centimetres and an estimated 1 million objects between 1 and 10 centimetres, with collision risk increasing geometrically as constellation density increases.

Kessler Syndrome: a cascade of collision debris spawning additional collisions, becomes increasingly probable as constellation density exceeds specific thresholds. Modelling suggests that once LEO reaches approximately 40,000 large tracked objects, collision-induced debris generation may exceed operational satellite deployments' debris mitigation capacity, creating self-sustaining cascading collisions that could render LEO partially inaccessible for decades. Current trajectories project reaching this threshold between 2028 and 2035 if mega-constellation deployment continues unabated.

The existing legal framework addresses this through non-binding sustainability guidelines recommending that operators conduct "conjunction assessment" (calculating whether their satellites will collide with tracked objects) and perform collision avoidance manoeuvres. However, these guidelines impose no binding obligation: operators may ignore recommendations without penalty. Starlink operators have ignored specific conjunction warning notifications rather than performing avoidance manoeuvres, prioritising network operations over collision risk reduction. No international enforcement mechanism compels compliance with sustainability guidelines.

Space Tourism and Human Spaceflight Privatisation

The emergence of private human spaceflight through Virgin Galactic (2023), Blue Origin (2021), and SpaceX (Crew Dragon, first operational crewed mission 2020) extends the non-traditional actor category beyond corporate infrastructure operators to commercial service providers transporting private individuals to suborbital or orbital space. Space tourism operations raise novel governance

questions: if a private company transports a private citizen on a suborbital flight and that citizen suffers injury, what liability standards apply? What regulatory authority oversees in-flight safety? Under what conditions do national airspace laws terminate and space law principles commence?

The existing frameworks address state astronauts' rescue and return; they do not address commercial space tourists' safety standards, medical qualification requirements, or liability limits. The US Federal Aviation Administration licensed Virgin Galactic's suborbital operations under experimental permit frameworks designed for research vehicles, not commercial passenger transport. This regulatory gap permits operators to develop safety procedures without binding international standards, with each state licensing commercial spaceflight under different criteria. A company could conduct operations as a "suborbital spaceflight" exempt from certain regulations by flying to 80 kilometres altitude, or conduct operations as "orbital spaceflight" subject to different regulations by exceeding 100 kilometres. Operators can select regulatory classifications optimising their commercial advantages.

All the subheadings are further elaborated in the subsections below.

RISE OF COMMERCIAL SPACE ACTIVITY:

Man and mankind has long had a habit of commercialising whatsoever possible. The Rise of Commercial Activity in Space can be divided into three distinct parts:

1. Foundation(1960-1969):

- a. 1962- Two major breakthroughs in commercial activity in space, the Telstar and the COMSAT act. The Telstar 1 satellite transmitted the first ever commercial television signal, which was transatlantic in nature, and proved that the Earth's orbit is a viable method for long range communication and transmissions. The United States of America passed the Communications Satellite Act, creating a public-private corporation to manage commercial satellite communication. This established the world's first regulatory framework for private space operations.
- b. 1965- This year marked the launch of Intelsat I (Early Bird), which allowed real-time international phone calls, television feeds, and data transfers to take place effectively; this satellite was based in the United States.
- c. 1967- The Soviet Union planned the satellite Intersputnik, which was a state-directed telecommunications satellite which would serve the nation, and regional allies.

2. Market Expansion(1970-1979):

- a. 1971- The Soviet Union successfully launched the Intersputnik network, which helped broadcast international television, radio and phone calls as well.
- b. 1974- Westar 1 was launched by the United States of America. This ignited a corporate race to buy satellite transponder time for private television networks, cable companies, and news agencies.
- c. 1976- Interkosmos Commercial Expansion was formalised by the Soviet Union, which formed a base for the opening of the Soviet markets to external paying entities for the services of the Orbital Space Stations.

3. Global Commercialisation (1980-1989):

- a. 1980- China Great Wall Industry Cooperation (CWIC) was formed, as a state-operated cooperation, meant for commercial purpose, and was the

sole enterprise tasked with exporting Chinese Space Technology therefore paving the way for China's commercial involvement in the space industries. Arianespace was also formed by the European Union which was the first practical alternative for private companies to access space via NASA's rockets.

- b. 1985- China officially introduced its Long March rocket family to the international market through CGWIC. This allowed foreign companies to buy affordable launch services from a state-backed communist provider, deeply undercutting Western launch prices.
- c. 1989- The first commercial three-stage rocket, Delta Rocket was built and operated by McDonnell Douglas, a private aerospace corporation in the United States of America. The Delta Rocket was later launched from Cape Canaveral.

4. Modern Commercial Activity in Space (1990-Present):

Today, mankind has fully commercialised space. Multiple satellite's, launched for commercial purposes, orbit Earth. Various features, like the GPS have been incorporated and integrated into daily life, which was made possible only by these satellites. Today, multi-million dollar companies like SpaceX (United States) and LandSpace (China) have been founded, and actively play a role in modern commercial activity in space.

NON TRADITIONAL ACTORS:

For quite some time, the exploration and use of outer space remained almost exclusively within the domain of national governments, constrained as it was due to extraordinary financial and technical barriers to entry. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967, was formulated largely for state actors operating within this reality. However, in recent years, the situation has changed drastically. The current situation is such that the non-state actors, particularly private commercial enterprises, have gained a substantially expanded role in space activity, driven by technological advances, reduced launch costs, and growing private capital investment in the sector. Even as this private role has grown, the underlying infrastructure of space exploration has continued to rely heavily on public financial support, meaning the state has not so much exited the space domain as it has begun sharing it with new categories of actors.

The recent involvement of private companies in space activities presents both significant opportunity and significant difficulty. On one hand, the entry of commercial actors has driven economic growth, accelerated innovation, and lowered the cost of access to orbit. On the other hand, it has introduced serious and largely unresolved challenges for global governance, international security, and the maintenance of peaceful cooperation in space mainly because the frameworks that were governed 60 years ago were never designed with such actors in mind.

The Outer Space Treaty governs the space activities of member states, their citizens, and international organizations acting under state authority, but the treaty itself does not explicitly or comprehensively adhere to the independent involvement of non-governmental, commercial entities. These entities are addressed only indirectly, through Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty, which requires that the activities of "non-governmental entities" in outer space be under the "authorization and continuing supervision" by an appropriate State Party, and which holds that state internationally responsible for ensuring such activities conform to the treaty. The treaty addresses such entities only through the intermediary of the state that licenses them, and does not have a direct regulation over them. This makes the strength, consistency, and enforcement of a private actor's obligations entirely dependent on the domestic legal responsibility of whichever state that authorizes it, rather than on any uniform international standard. There remains no settled international consensus on the precise scope of a state's responsibility for the commercial entities operating under its jurisdiction.

With private actors moving beyond routine satellite deployment, and engaging in development of space habitats and the extraction of resources from celestial bodies, this ambiguity becomes especially more consequential. As the long established territorial and sovereign boundaries become blurred by the presence of commercially driven non-state actors, foundational treaty principles are

placed under direct strain. Article II of the Outer Space Treaty explicitly prohibits the national appropriation of outer space, the Moon, or other celestial bodies "by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means", a provision negotiated specifically to prevent the geopolitical rivalries of Earth from being extended into space. Yet as private interest in the extraction and ownership of extraterrestrial resources has increased, this non-appropriation principle has come under increasing pressure. Several states have since enacted domestic legislation permitting their private sector entities to own, transport, and sell resources extracted from celestial bodies. This allowance directly challenges the treaty's founding assumption that no actor, state or private, may assert ownership over space itself.

The consequence of this legal gray zone is an ever increasing gap between the pace of commercial and technological advancement in space and the rate of international legal consensus. Space legislation was a domain that was explicitly conceived of as a shared, common heritage of humankind rather than a patchwork of individually governed jurisdictions. However, state practices like unilateral domestic legislation have begun to raise the risk of fragmented, inconsistent, and potentially conflicting national approaches to this shared arena. This also raises harder questions about accountability and enforcement: because responsibility under the existing framework flows through the licensing state rather than the private actor itself, inconsistent national oversight standards create the potential for regulatory arbitrage, where commercial entities may seek out jurisdictions with lighter supervisory requirements.

This is precisely the tension this committee has been convened to address. The rise of non-traditional actors is not a peripheral or speculative concern, it is already actively reshaping how space activity is conducted, financed, and governed, often faster than the international legal architecture can keep up with. If not addressed timely, the growing disconnect between an expanding, commercially driven space sector and a legal framework still structured around state-only accountability risks normalizing a governance vacuum in which practical policy is set not through deliberate multilateral consensus, but through the unilateral actions of whichever states or private entities move first. Resolving how the international community should update, clarify, or reinforce existing legal obligations to meaningfully account for non-traditional actors would make up for the core discussions for this committee's mandate.

ONGOING PROCESSES AT UNCOPUOS:

The UNCOPUOS has seen various meetings, with over 190 sessions across committees and subcommittees. The following is a list of dates and latest sessions of the UNCOPUOS:

1. Legal Subcommittee- 65th Session (15-22 April 2026)
2. Scientific and Technical Subcommittee- 63rd Session (2-9 and 11-13 February 2026)
3. Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space- 69th Session (10-18 June)

This year the UNCOPUOS met again, and the following important topics were discussed:

- The Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities deliberate but could not reach any important conclusion on its assigned task. They decided to continue work as per the work plan again in February 2027.
- The Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness discussed preliminary recommendations focused on operationalizing guidelines B.1 and B.4 of the Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, which the Committee adopted by consensus in 2019. These guidelines address, respectively, the provision of operator contact information and information on space objects and orbital events (B.1), and the performance of conjunction assessment during all orbital phases of controlled flight (B.4). The Expert Group was unable to reach consensus on its draft recommendations and agreed to hold up to four intersessional meetings during the period leading up to the next session of the STSC.
- The Action Team on Lunar Activities Consultation continued consultations regarding activities on the moon, as in accordance with relevant internationally recognised legal framework.
- The Committee continued consultations on the proposal to hold the UNISPACE IV Summit in Vienna in 2027 to mark the 60th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty. A significant number of states voiced support for holding UNISPACE IV in 2027; however, consensus was not reached on this. As the proposed host country, Austria offered a significant financial commitment if UNISPACE IV goes ahead in 2027, but there would still be a shortfall that would have to be funded through additional

extra-budgetary contributions by other UN Member States. Further informal consultations will be held in the coming months, led by Italy, in its capacity as Chair of COPUOS during the period 2026–2027.

- The Committee also deliberated on its methods of work, including:
 - criteria for introducing new agenda items; measures to review existing agenda items; ways to balance formal and informal meetings; ways to better utilize technical presentations, conference room papers, and the symposia associated with COPUOS sessions in order to facilitate expert input into the Committee's deliberations; and ways to enhance coordination and consistency among the Committee and its subsidiary bodies.
- Held in coordination with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), workshops focused on safety frameworks for expanding nuclear power uses in deep-space and lunar exploration missions.
- Panels examined emerging threats to optical and radio astronomy from high-density satellite constellations, space-based reflector projects ("Sunlight as a Service"), and proposed orbital data centers.
- Delegations addressed international lunar coordination frameworks alongside inputs from commercial operators participating in programs like Artemis II.
- UNOOSA and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) formally launched a partnership initiative to expand developing nations' access to industrial space technologies.
- UNOOSA, the Commonwealth, and private partners launched a data-access system providing Earth observation data to nations most vulnerable to climate change.
- Multiple African nations showcased regional space law programs, satellite launches (e.g., Algeria's Alsat-3 series), and climate-monitoring collaborations.

PARALLEL AND COMPETING FRAMEWORKS:

UNCOPUOS continues with its slow, consensus-driven effort to build multilateral principles for space governance. However several states, impatient for that process to conclude, have negotiated bilateral and coalition-based agreements entirely outside the UN system. This has thus created a landscape where practical norms for space conduct are increasingly being set forward before UN-endorsed multilateral consensus can take place.

Artemis Accords is a set of non-binding principles for lunar and space exploration first signed in October 2020 by eight founding states. The initial signatories were the government-run space agencies of Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and the list of signatories has since increased gradually. The Accords address issues such as peaceful space exploration, transparency in national space policies, data sharing, assistance in space emergencies, registration of space objects, interoperability, establishing safety zones, limiting space debris, and preserving space heritage. As of this year, participation has grown substantially, with Djibouti becoming the 72nd country to sign the Accords in September 2026.

The Accords are explicitly framed by their drafters as grounded in and consistent with the Outer Space Treaty. They are established through a series of bilateral agreements between the United States and individual partner nations rather than through multilateral treaty negotiation. This has thus proven to be controversial and has been criticised for being a United States-led framework operating outside UN processes. China has not participated, partly because of US legislation restricting NASA's bilateral cooperation with Chinese entities. Critics of the Accords argue that provisions such as the concept of "safety zones" around lunar operations risk functioning as a soft form of territorial exclusivity. This was precisely the kind of national appropriation the Outer Space Treaty's Article II was designed to prevent.

The International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) was announced jointly by China and Russia in 2021. It is a planned lunar base led by Roscosmos and the China National Space Administration, with construction planned to begin in the following years. China has stated its ambition to involve as many as fifty countries in the project, and has already signed cooperation agreements with

several states including Venezuela, Belarus, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, South Africa, Egypt, Nicaragua, Thailand, Serbia, and Kazakhstan, with a particular diplomatic focus on Global South participation.

Further fragmentation occurs due to unilateral national legislation. Several states have independently passed domestic laws granting their private-sector entities the right to own, transport, and sell resources from celestial bodies . As these laws are enacted domestically rather than negotiated multilaterally, they raise the risk of inconsistent, potentially conflicting national interpretations of principles that the Outer Space Treaty intended to apply universally, particularly the non-appropriation principle under Article II.

These parallel frameworks illustrate how lunar governance is increasingly being organized around geopolitical coalitions rather than a single universal standard.

This raises a sharp question for discussion on whether UNCOPUOS should attempt to harmonise or formally recognize these parallel efforts within a single UN-endorsed framework, or is the international community already moving toward a future of coexisting, coalition-based space governance regimes rather than one universal system?

CASE STUDIES:

As these private companies in multiple states independently drive down launch costs and enable constellation-scale deployment, the "authorization and continuing supervision" obligation under Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty is being tested simultaneously across several national jurisdictions, each with its own regulatory standards, reinforcing the need for the committee to consider whether a more consistent international approach is required.

1. SPUTNIX:

Russian space activity has been almost entirely state-controlled, a legacy of the Soviet-era model in which Roscosmos and its predecessors held a near-total monopoly on launch, satellite manufacturing, and mission operations. Sputnix, a subsidiary of the privately owned Sitronics Group, represents a notable break from that tradition as one of Russia's first private space companies. The firm specializes in mass-producing micro- and nanosatellites (CubeSats), operating two flagship constellations: SITRO-AIS, a rapidly growing network of small satellites that track global maritime traffic via Automatic Identification System signals, serving commercial shipping along the strategically important Northern Sea Route and Zorkiy-2M, an Earth remote-sensing constellation providing commercial imagery at 2.5–2.8 metre resolution for agriculture, forestry, and environmental monitoring. By early 2025, Sputnix had launched roughly 80 satellites, the majority forming its own operational constellations. Notably, while Sputnix relies on state-owned launch vehicles (such as the Soyuz-2.1b from Vostochny Cosmodrome) to reach orbit, its hardware development, data sales, and mission control are run entirely as a private commercial enterprise.

2. ISAR AEROSPACE

Isar Aerospace is a German agency that emerged as the continent's premier venture-backed launch startup to restore independent access to space. As German relations with Russia changed, its access to launch facilities was drastically limited, threatening its independence. Isar Aerospace built a highly vertically integrated manufacturing model. They utilize a massive automated production facility to build up to 40 rockets per year entirely in-house, using

eco-friendly liquid oxygen and propane propellants. The agency is famous for having developed the Spectrum Rocket, a 28m tall, two-staged vehicle designed specifically to carry up to 1,000 kg to Low Earth Orbit (LEO), perfectly sized for the booming small-to-medium satellite market.

3. LANDSPACE:

LandSpace, a Chinese commercial launch company, uses methane-liquid oxygen (methalox) engines instead of traditional kerosene-fueled propulsion, a cleaner-burning fuel that better supports rapid reusability. Its Zhuque-2 became the world's first methalox rocket to reach orbit in 2023, and its larger Zhuque-3, a 76-metre stainless-steel vehicle, achieved China's first-ever landing of an orbital-class first stage using landing legs in August 2026 (though the booster later toppled after a post-landing fire, underscoring that recovery alone doesn't yet mean full reusability). Backed by private venture capital rather than state funding, LandSpace is moving from experimental flights toward high-cadence commercial production, positioning itself to help launch China's national Guowang satellite mega-constellation at a lower cost per kilogram.

4. SpaceX:

Founded in 2002, SpaceX has emerged as the most consequential private actor in modern spaceflight, using reusable rocket technology (Falcon 9, Falcon Heavy) to drastically cut launch costs and enable a pace of activity once reserved for states. Its Starlink constellation of thousands of satellites providing global internet coverage, now operates at a scale that individual national oversight was never designed to manage, raising real questions about orbital congestion and space traffic control. In 2020, its Crew Dragon spacecraft became the first privately built vehicle to carry astronauts to the International Space Station, a milestone until then exclusive to state space agencies.

5. BLUE ORIGIN:

This is a company founded by Jeff Bezos, the founder of the world-famous company, Amazon. Its key projects include:

- a. New Shepard- A reusable suborbital rocket system designed for human spaceflight and research.

- b. New Glenn: A heavy-lift orbital launch vehicle built to carry large payloads.
- c. A human and robotic lunar lander being developed for NASA's Artemis program.

This organisation has been entrusted by NASA itself to have been selected by it in 2026, and was given the responsibility of building the spacecraft for the Mars Telecommunication Network. Recently, the organisation also rolled out its Quartz ground station network across multiple global sites.

6. PLANET LABS:

Planet Labs PBC (known as "Planet") is a public American Earth-imaging company based in San Francisco, California, that operates the largest commercial fleet of Earth observation satellites in orbit. Founded in 2010 by former NASA scientists Chris Boshuizen, Will Marshall, and Robbie Schingler, the company aims to image the entire Earth's landmass daily to make global change visible, accessible, and actionable. This agency relies on an "agile aerospace" approach, mass-producing smaller, low-cost satellites that iterate rapidly rather than building massive, expensive platforms. Notable projects include PlanetScope, a fleet of 200+ active, small CubeSats weighing roughly 5 kg each that capture 3-meter resolution multispectral imagery, allowing Planet to scan the entire Earth landmass every day, and the SkySat, a constellation of 21 high-resolution satellites offering sub-daily revisit capabilities and 0.5-meter high-resolution panchromatic and multispectral imagery for targeted site monitoring. This agency specialises in monitoring and provides satellite data on demand. This agency also constitutes a major sector of the supply of information to defence and intelligence bureaus. Its data is also shared with agriculture, forestry, and the meteorological departments.

KEY TERMINOLOGIES:

1. Outer Space Treaty (OST)- The 1967 treaty establishing the basic principles governing the exploration and use of outer space, including peaceful use and the prohibition of national appropriation.
2. Rescue Agreement- The 1968 treaty requiring states to assist astronauts in distress and facilitate their safe return, as well as the return of space objects.
3. Liability Convention- The 1972 treaty establishing rules for state liability for damage caused by space objects.
4. Registration Convention- The 1975 treaty establishing a system for registering objects launched into outer space.
5. Moon Agreement- The 1979 treaty governing activities on the Moon and other celestial bodies, including the principle that their resources are the common heritage of humankind.
6. Five UN Space Treaties- The Outer Space Treaty, Rescue Agreement, Liability Convention, Registration Convention, and Moon Agreement.
7. Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (LTS)- UN guidelines and practices intended to ensure that outer space remains safe, stable, and usable for future generations.
8. Non-Appropriation Principle- The principle that outer space, the Moon, and other celestial bodies cannot be claimed as national territory.
9. Common Heritage of Mankind- A principle under which certain areas or resources are regarded as belonging to humanity collectively rather than to individual states.
10. State Responsibility- The responsibility of a state for activities in outer space carried out by it or, under the Outer Space Treaty, by non-governmental entities under its jurisdiction.
11. Authorization and Continuing Supervision- The requirement that non-governmental space activities be authorized and continuously supervised by an appropriate state.
12. Launching State- A state that launches or procures the launching of a space object, or from whose territory or facility a space object is launched.
13. Domestic Space Law- National legislation regulating space activities within a state's jurisdiction.

14. International Space Law- The body of international treaties, principles, customary rules, and other instruments governing activities in outer space.
15. Binding Law- Legal rules that create obligations that states are legally required to follow.
16. Soft Law- Non-binding principles, guidelines, declarations, or recommendations that can influence state behaviour without creating treaty-level legal obligations.
17. UNOOSA- The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, which supports UN activities concerning outer space and serves as the secretariat for UNCOPUOS.
18. Legal Subcommittee (LSC)- The UNCOPUOS subsidiary body responsible for considering legal questions concerning the exploration and use of outer space.
19. Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC)- The UNCOPUOS subsidiary body responsible for scientific and technical aspects of space activities.
20. UNISPACE- A series of United Nations conferences focused on international cooperation and the peaceful uses of outer space.
21. Space Governance- The systems, institutions, rules, principles, and practices used to regulate space activities.
22. Regulatory Fragmentation- A situation in which different states apply substantially different rules to similar space activities.
23. Regulatory Harmonization- The process of making different national or international regulatory systems more consistent with one another.
24. Regulatory Arbitrage- The practice of choosing a jurisdiction with less restrictive or more favourable regulations for conducting an activity.
25. Non-Traditional Space Actor- A space participant that is not a conventional state space agency, particularly private companies, commercial operators, and other non-governmental entities.
26. Non-Governmental Entity- A private or other non-state organization conducting activities outside direct government ownership or operation.
27. Commercial Space Activity- Space activity undertaken primarily to provide goods, services, infrastructure, or other economic value.

28. Private Space Company- A privately owned organization developing or operating space-related technologies or services.
29. Commercial Spaceflight- Spaceflight conducted by private or commercial organizations rather than exclusively by governments.
30. Barrier to Entry- A financial, technological, legal, or regulatory obstacle that makes it difficult for new organizations to enter the space sector.
31. Vertical Integration- A business model in which a company controls multiple stages of production or operations internally.
32. Space Tourism- Commercial activity involving private individuals travelling to or experiencing outer space.
33. Private Human Spaceflight- Human spaceflight conducted by private companies rather than exclusively by government space agencies.
34. Space Resource Activity- An activity involving the exploration, extraction, recovery, use, transportation, or utilization of space resources
35. Asteroid Mining- The proposed extraction of valuable materials from asteroids.
36. Lunar Mining- The extraction of resources from the Moon.
37. In-Situ Resource Utilization (ISRU)- Using resources found at a space destination rather than transporting all required materials from Earth.
38. Space Resource Ownership- The legal question of whether extracted space resources can be privately or nationally owned.
39. Lunar Governance- The development and application of rules governing activities on and around the Moon.
40. Safety Zone- An area established around a space activity to reduce harmful interference or operational risks.
41. Space Debris- Human-made objects or fragments in space that no longer serve a useful purpose.
42. Orbital Congestion- The increasing concentration of satellites and other objects in particular orbital regions.
43. Space Traffic Management (STM)- The coordination and regulation of space traffic to reduce collisions and other hazards.
44. Space Situational Awareness (SSA)- The ability to detect, track, identify, and understand objects and events in space.
45. Conjunction Assessment- The process of determining whether two space objects may come dangerously close to one another.

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- 46. Collision Avoidance- Measures taken to prevent spacecraft or other space objects from colliding.
- 47. Low Earth Orbit (LEO)- An orbital region relatively close to Earth, commonly used for Earth observation, communications, and large satellite constellations.
- 48. Remote Sensing- The collection of information about an object or area without making direct physical contact, commonly using satellites.
- 49. Launch Vehicle- A rocket or other vehicle used to carry a payload from Earth into space.
- 50. Reusable Launch Vehicle- A launch vehicle designed so that some or all of its components can be recovered and used again.



PAPERWORK GUIDE:

All paperwork is to be sent to the committee email ID:

uncopuos.ssmun2026@gmail.com

The standard font for all committee paperwork must be Times New Roman and font size must be 12.

The accepted paperwork the UNCOPUOS committee is the following:

- Position Paper
- Presidential Statement
- Communique
- Working Paper
- Draft Resolutions
- Reports

For details and specifics regarding different forms of paperwork, delegates are to refer to the conference handbook. The following are certain committee-specific recommendations for the same.

Note: The UNCOPUOS committee will not be accepting any paperwork before the committee begins, other than the Position Paper.

Position Paper:

The position paper holds immense significance as it is the first piece of paperwork which any delegate needs to send. It encompasses and contains all the extensive research done by a delegate, their policy and the solutions that they have thought of. The first time the executive board analyses every delegate is through the position paper which needs to be sent prior to the committee. It is highly advisable to produce a high-quality position paper to have an excellent first impression before your executive board. A position paper consists primarily of three parts→ ‘Statement of the Problem’, ‘Country Policy’ and ‘Solutions’.

Statement of the Problem:

The first section of the position paper entails the agenda itself, explained through a neutral perspective. It contains the history of the problem, the possible causes and current State of the crisis or the problem. It is a representation of the delegate's comprehension of the agenda and the problem while also giving a first glimpse of the depth of the delegate's research. It is advisable to keep this part brief and only include the most important aspects in the view of the delegate.

Country Policy:

The second part of the position paper is country specific and includes how each individual country views the agenda, their involvement in the crisis and the stance that the delegate will be taking in committee in accordance with the country's foreign policy. It also elaborates on the country's history in regard to the agenda, the past actions (if any) taken by the country and how the crisis presently affects the country. Any conventions, treaties or organizations created or supported by the country along with any action taken with international organizations particularly the United Nations must also be enlisted here. Solutions:

The most vital part of the position paper is the solutions section which is again delegate specific and not generic in nature. It should include unique and viable solutions which can be pitched in committee and those that can be accepted by the international community. All potential solutions listed by the delegate in this section must be in compliance with their foreign policy. It is advised that every delegate takes into consideration their country's advantage while proposing these solutions.

Delegates are also advised to include citations in their position papers.

For sample position paper kindly refer to the conference handbook.

NOTE: THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF POSITION PAPERS IS 5th OCTOBER, 2026, 11:59 pm. It is strongly advised that the delegates keep the content of their position papers under 10 pages.

Working Paper:

A working paper is a precursor to the Draft Resolution. It is mainly a loosely formatted document that has recommendations to the committee or solutions for the given agenda that the authors feel should be implemented. A working paper is generally not formally voted upon (informal voting) and serves as a way of foreshadowing the solutions to be present in the end paperworks, i.e, the draft resolution.

For sample working paper kindly refer to the conference handbook.

Draft Resolution:

Draft Resolution is a formal document that specifies a plan of action that is to be undertaken by the United Nations Committee on Peaceful Use of Outer Space to address a crisis. The Draft Resolution has an extremely strict format and not adhering to the format can get the resolution scrapped. A Draft resolution starts with a “name” or “title”, followed by the names of the authors, then the signatories (delegates who wish for the resolution to be discussed in committee, not necessarily side with it) and finally enters the main body of the resolution. The main body of the resolution can also be subdivided into two parts, first are the preambulatory clauses [separator to be used is “,”] and then the operative clauses [separator to be used is “;”]. Further, a full stop [.] signifies the end of the draft resolution.

Authors: They are the members or countries who wish to introduce the paperwork written by them.

Signatories: Are the members that want the paperwork to be discussed in committee. Being a signatory does not imply that the member supports the resolution.

Phrases: Phrases are what we start clauses with:

Preambulatory Phrases are phrases[have to be italicized] to start a preambulatory clause;

Operative Phrase [have to be underlined] is to begin an operative clause.

Kindly refer to the Conference Handbook for the list of phrases that will be accepted and sample Draft Resolution.

Working Group Reports:

Within the Legal Subcommittee, individual agenda items are frequently assigned to smaller Working Groups tasked with negotiating focused, consensus-based outcomes on a single issue, rather than the Subcommittee addressing the entire agenda as one body.

At the conclusion of its deliberations, each Working Group produces a Working Group Report, generally presented by its Chair to the full Subcommittee. This report summarizes the discussions held, records any conclusions or draft language that was agreed upon, and, where relevant, notes the points on which consensus could not be reached. The report does not stand as an independent or binding document; rather, it is incorporated into the broader report of the Legal Subcommittee, which is subsequently forwarded to the full Committee and, eventually, to the UN General Assembly for further consideration.

As UNCOPUOS operates on a consensus-based model of decision-making, a Working Group Report may explicitly record disagreement or the absence of consensus, rather than presenting only agreed conclusions.

The specific format for working group reports and further details regarding it will be explained in committee during the conference.

CITATIONS:

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