

**Statement by Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Delegate, in the Special Political and
Decolonization (4th) Committee, on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer
Space-Agenda Item 30, 13 October 2006**

1. I would like to thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) for his introduction of the Committee's report for its 49th Session.

2. Pakistan values the continuing significant contribution of COPUOS to promote international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space in the common interest of mankind.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The resolution adopted annually by the General Assembly under this agenda item is a comprehensive framework of policies and programs, and their scientific, technical and legal aspects, aimed at promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. Most of our positions are reflected in the resolution. I would just like to limit my comments to a few points.

4. The importance of space system based disaster management has become abundantly clear especially in the wake of a series of tragic natural disasters in recent years. That need, we acutely felt in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck Pakistan in October last year. Although the earthquake could not be averted, Satellite Remote Sensing (SRS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) were used for speedy mapping of the disaster stricken areas helping in timely damage assessment and ensuring effective and coordinated rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations. Prompt access to satellite remote sensing data was also provided to us by the International Charter Space and Major Disasters. I would like to express from this forum our gratitude to the international community, including the scientific community, for all their assistance and support to enable us to deal with the aftermath of the earthquake.

5. The proposed establishment of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) is a welcome and timely step. We appreciate the ad-hoc expert group and the Committee for their work to make it possible, and express our readiness to contribute to the success of this program.

Mr. Chairman,

6. An important element of the Committee's work is the identification of new areas of application of space technologies for sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, efforts should continue to promote maximum engagement of developing countries including through sharing of experience and new technologies, non-discriminatory, affordable and timely access to state of the art data and information, and capacity building for use of space technology in different fields.

7. The continued prosperity and welfare of nations hinges on uses of space technologies. It will be a mistake to jeopardize the security of such a vital and precious resource. Preventing the possibility of an arms race in outer space is therefore a common concern and an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. The states with major space capabilities have greater responsibilities in that regard. Greater emphasis by some states on the security uses of outer space in their military doctrines could risk the security of all humanity. We support the view that the Committee should promote greater transparency in the space activities being undertaken by various states.

8. Pakistan has always maintained that the work of COPUOS is not completely irrelevant to the question of prevention of arms race in outer space. COPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament (CD) have complementary roles, and in our view, it is necessary to establish and strengthen working relationship and channels of communication between the two bodies. We also appreciate the Canadian proposal, made in the CD this year, to enhance the dialogue between various UN bodies engaged in outer space related activities, including the COPUOS, the ITU, the CD and the UN General Assembly.

9. We are of the view that some work should commence on addressing the lacunas in the international legal frameworks on regulating activity in outer space and further strengthening international cooperation. We, therefore, agree that: a) further development of legal norms, wherever appropriate to address new development in space technology and increasing universal interest in its application, may be given consideration, as recommended by the 1993 group of government's experts; b) work done by the COPUOS could be used in developing future legal frameworks.

Mr. Chairman,

10. Pakistan continues to put into practice the knowledge and experience gained in application of space sciences and technology to projects of national importance. Let me briefly touch upon some of these activities:

11. In order to promote and encourage the use of space technology and its peaceful applications, the Government of Pakistan has provided two transponders on Pakistan's Communication Satellite, PAKSAT-1, to the Virtual University.

12. SUPARCO has initiated a VSAT based telemedicine pilot project, using PAKSAT-1 transponder bandwidth, to provide cost effective health care and tele-medical facilities to people in rural areas. Tele-medicine work is being carried out at present by two hospitals using terrestrial communications, which is now being expanded with SUPARCO's assistance to far flung areas through satellite communications.

13. In the field of agriculture, satellite remote sensing data has been used for cotton crop estimation in a pilot project of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in collaboration with SUPARCO. With encouraging results, the scope of the project has now been expanded to include the wheat crop.

14. SUPARCO has also undertaken a number of programs in public and private sectors relating to natural resource management and environmental surveying, satellite meteorology, and atmospheric pollution monitoring. Some of the recent projects include:

- Aquaculture Development in Coastal Areas
- Assessment of Mangrove Forests along the Coast of Pakistan
- Launching of Vehicle Tracking and Fleet Management Services
- Baseline Study and Survey of Flood Plain Areas
- Establishment of Geo database, Hardware, Software, and Tracking System for Monitoring Watercourses in the province of Sindh
- Environmental Impact Assessment for Public and Private Sector Organizations
- Seasonal Study of Aerosol Optical Thickness and Cloud Cover over Pakistan
- Study of widespread winter fog in North-Eastern Pakistan
- Study of impact of global warming on water resources and adaptation measures for management
- Land use map of Pakistan
- Provision of data, training and assistance to National Highways Authority, Gas distribution companies, telecommunication companies, and urban planners, etc.

15. In order to further promote the use of space, the Government of Pakistan has approved the launching of a communications satellite, planned for 2009, and two remote sensing satellites.

Mr. Chairman,

16. Pakistan is a signatory to the five UN Treaties and Principles on Outer Space. We are a founder member of the Asia Pacific Multilateral Cooperation on Space Technology and Applications (AP-MCSTA). Pakistan is also one of the first countries to sign the Convention of the Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organization. As a member of the UN COPOUS, Pakistan remains committed to its objectives and activities to promote peaceful uses of outer space.

Thank you.

