



Mission Viejo High School Model United Nations
29th Annual Conference
“Through the Fire the Spirit is Forged”



Topic Synopsis

COPUOS, International Rights to the Moon and Asteroids

I. Background

Beginning with early astronomers of our ancient world, space has always been pondered upon by means of what is out there, who created it, and how could more knowledge be acquired about such an unknown place. Evidently, knowledge was garnered about stars, the sun, the moon and other possible planets; but no man had ever laid foot on any outer-orbital region of Earth until 1975 during the influential “Space Race”. The Space Race was a pioneering effort between the USSR and US for supremacy in space exploration, which then turned into an even larger competition to land the first human on the moon, thus giving the country a sense of entitlement to its ownership. This competition left the world with the notorious picture of the American flag, sticking out of the moons surface which silently scolded the USSR that the US had come out victorious. Nevertheless, the space race only marked the beginnings of space explorations by countries globally. Since 1975, explorations to the moon have been miniscule since outer space is such an unexplained and almost extraterrestrial territory. Space trips potentially engender a tension between certain countries who wish to claim the same discoveries in the outside world. In these very instances lie the initial questions, who has the rights to explore and who has the rights to claim space objects as their own territory? Due to the fact that space isn’t a home-land where humans reside, it is truly a territory that cannot be claimed; however, countries presume to do so, thus causing potential conflict amongst already peaceful countries, and ultimately, conflict around the world.

II. UN Involvement



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Due to arising questions, debates and potential conflicts, the United Nations recognized the issue of space rights immediately and based certain committees to placate arising issues. Committees such as UNOOSA(United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs) and COPUOS(Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) were formed in the late 1950’s when space exploration came into question amongst the world, obviously pre-Space Race. UNOOSA implements the Program on Space Applications and maintains the Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space. The Office also provides support to developing nations in using space technology for economic development. COPUOS was initially created to review the scope of international cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space, to devise programs in this field to be undertaken under United Nations sponsors, to encourage continued research and the dissemination of information on outer space matters, and to study legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space but has now been devised into two subcommittees, scientific and technical subcommittee and legal subcommittee. Other affiliated international organizations include the International Law Association (ILA), The Planetary Society (TPS), and Association of Space Explorers (ASE). Treaties established include the Outer Space Treaty, Registration Convention, and the Moon Treaty which all together enable peacefulness regarding what is launched into space, who controls and operates it, and ownership of space objects.

III. Possible Solutions

Solutions that could potentially be called for include plans for possession and territorial contracts signed by countries who seek ownership. Other solutions could banish ownership of



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asteroids or the moon, for space could be regarded as a free area entitled to no country's ownership or rights. Depending on a country's stance toward space action, advocating rights to objects and masses in space depicts on a country's preference and economic stance.

IV. Bloc Positions

Asian Bloc: There is said to be a new found space race where Asian countries have national space programs, and they are considered to be competing with each other to achieve scientific and technological advancements in space. It is also said that numerous Asian nations have become serious contenders in the "race" to control space.

European Bloc: The European Space Agency (ESA) is dedicated to exploring space and has an annual budget of about €3.99 billion / \$5.65 billion US dollars as of 2011.

African Bloc: There has been only space exploration trip from a nation in 2002. Continents with a higher economic status tend to have completed at least a few expeditions of space travel.

V. Guiding Questions

1. What is your countries stance on space explorations?
2. Does your country have a claim to any objects in space?
3. What explorations has your country previously made in space or plans to do in the future?
4. Could ownership over space objects lead to wars?