



Topic Synopsis

COPUOS, Issue of current state and future state of space debris

I. Background of Topic

Ever since humans started exploring space and making efforts to achieve accomplishments outside of Earth’s boundaries, a seemingly small but impactful problem has begun to form in the space surrounding Earth. During various events involving the use of spacecraft and satellites, large amounts of debris have begun to accumulate in space and orbit around the Earth.

All space faring nations are involved in this problem. Since the beginning of space exploration, debris from spacecraft has been nonchalantly littered in space, and the trash will continue to exist there and cause potential harm to future space missions.

The issue of space debris is a serious problem to the world for a variety of reasons. It is likely that in the future, space exploration will become an integral part of scientific research and a means to expand humanity. Space debris that occupies the area surrounding the Earth will pose a serious threat to future missions in space, as the even the smallest particle of debris traveling at a high speed can severely damage spacecraft. This poses an immense risk to the safety and well being of astronauts during manned missions to space, as well as a notable financial risk to the agencies and nations involved in space exploration. The UN is involved in this issue because space is international territory, and to ensure the future safety and usability of space, nations must cooperate and come up with a comprehensive solution to this problem.

II. UN Involvement

There have been a few important measures taken by the UN in order to help deal with this growing problem in space. The purpose and goal of COPUOS is to encourage cooperation



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

between different nations with the intention of preserving peace in outer space, and coming up with solutions that will benefit the well being of mankind. Under the mission statement of this committee lies the responsibility to solve any problems that occur in space caused by exploration, thus COPUOS has been readily involved in the cleaning up of space debris. Also, the IADC, or Inter-Agency Debris Coordination Committee, is focused solely on dealing with the problems of space debris and measures to combat the issue. This committee focuses on eliminating man made as well as natural space debris through increased communication amongst space agencies worldwide, and serves as a place for agencies to formulate and discuss new ideas to implement.

III. Possible Solutions

There are many facets of this situation that must be addressed in order to come up with a successful solution to the problem of space debris. Much of the problem has to do with the fact that there is limited knowledge on the exact location of various pieces of space debris that are currently in orbit around the Earth. Knowledge of these locations, and the spread of such information will be essential to removing the debris from its dangerous orbit. In terms of actually mitigating the amount of space debris in orbit, there are a variety of options that may be used. Some methods involve physically destroying the debris, using laser devices or explosives, however these methods are very expensive and also pose potential threats to the peace of space. Other methods involve redirecting the debris into Earth’s atmosphere, where it would disintegrate or fall back to earth. The problem with this method has to do with the risk of harming civilians on the ground from falling debris. Debris would have to be “aimed” and directed away from areas of high human populations or areas of value.



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

IV. Bloc Positions

Western Bloc: The western bloc is highly concerned about the possible impacts space debris has on future plans for space exploration as well as threats to communications satellites. Measures are being researched to help deal with this problem.

Asian Bloc: The asian bloc has also demonstrated much concern regarding this issue, and is currently attempting to come up with solutions to prevent losses from damage caused by space debris.

Latin Bloc: The latin bloc has shown equal concern in this matter, and stresses the importance of accountability amongst nations to keep space free of debris.

African Bloc: The african bloc is not quite as directly involved in this issue as other blocs, as its infrastructure in space is not as vast that of other blocs. However, there is still a large amount of concern having to do with the safety and management of space debris falling back to Earth.

V. Guiding Questions

1. What is your nation’s stance on the importance of this issue?
2. How is your country specifically affected by this problem?
3. What has your nation done so far to address this problem?
4. How many resources is your country willing to contribute in order to solve this problem?
5. Who should take responsibility for this issue?
6. What would be the most effective way to solve this problem?
7. How willing is your nation to work with other entities in order to solve this topic?