First Committee – Disarmament and International Security

This committee aims to create a more peaceful world. Talks in this committee center around reducing weapons in the world. It also identifies threats to peace and find solutions to international security.

This committee believes the world can become stable through cooperation. Countries can protect their people better if they work together for peace. For example, this committee might discuss how to keep weapons from terrorists. Or, how less weapons can make the world safer. Also, countries talk about policing weapons and finding ways to reduce the weapons they have.

First Committee works closely with United Nations Disarmament Commission and Conference on Disarmament. They have passed resolutions on ammunition, military spending and missiles.

Agenda Item 95.A – Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space

Humans have always been curious about outer space. In 1865 Jules Verne wrote From the Earth to the Moon about three people who are shot out of a large gun and land on the moon. His book became very popular and shows it is a topic people that interests many people.

During World War II many countries were experimenting with rockets. In fact, it was during WWII that humans first sent an object into space. After the war, many countries continued to experiment with rockets and by October 1957 the USSR (now Russia) sent the first satellite into space. Less than a month later they sent up a dog which was the first animal in orbit. Over the next 15 years the U.S. and the USSR would compete in what history calls the Space Race.

The Space Race was positive because new technologies were created but people were also worried. What if a country put weapons in space? The U.S. at one time had a plan called Project A119 to explode a nuclear bomb on the moon. The USSR had a program called Almaz that made space stations with a cannon that could shoot in space.

The United Nations believes that space should be used for peaceful purposes. During the 1950s and 1960s the UN talked a lot about how countries can use space peacefully. They created the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space Committee. They also helped create the “Outer Space Treaty”. This treaty says no country can put weapons of mass destruction in space or on an object in space – like the moon.

It is great no nuclear weapons are allowed in space, but how can we keep space free from all weapons?
Space is discussed in both 1st and 4th Committee but in 4th Committee the states focus on the peaceful uses of outer space. Countries have negotiated treaties that ban countries from putting weapons of mass destruction in space. However other weapons are not banned. The UN has been trying to support countries to come to an agreement that would prevent an arms race in outer space. In fact, each year the General Assembly introduces and adopts a resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. One of the major problems however is that Israel and the U.S. always abstain from voting. It is important to get the US to agree because they are a major power in space exploration.

There are many issues related to the militarization of space that people do not think about. For example, the U.S. is building a national missile defense program. This program will destroy missiles from before they reach the U.S. Some countries however worry because these missiles could also be used to target objects in space. If weapons are shot from the ground and enter space should they be considered “space weapons”?

In addition, in 2007, China used a missile to destroy one of their old satellites. In 2008, the U.S. used a missile to destroy a satellite that was broken. No country was attacked, but now the whole world knows the U.S. and China can destroy any satellite they want. Countries might not feel safe launching satellites into space if it means they can be destroyed at any time. Destroying objects in space causes another major problem: space debris. Right now there are 19 000 pieces of debris circling the Earth that are bigger than 5 cm. This can damage spaceships, satellites and anything put into orbit.

In 2008 China and Russia presented a treaty that would ban all weapons from space. It is called the Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT). You can read the 2014 version here: http://bit.ly/22ovXzl. The EU created an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities in 2008. The EU thinks that if all countries can agree to the Code of Conduct it will help countries come to an agreement on a Treaty. Nonetheless, not all countries can agree on the Code of Conduct or the Treaty.

**Outer Space Treaty**

This treaty forms he basis for international space law and entered into force on 10 October 1967. It Bans weapons of mass destruction from space and says no country can ‘claim’ the moon or any other planet or object. It also maintains that space should be used for peaceful purposes.

**The Rescue Agreement**

This agreement gives more detail about Article V in the Outer Space Treaty and entered into force on 3 December 1968. It states all members of the treaty should help astronauts that need help and this was meant to protect astronauts who accidently landed in other countries. Also, if space technology lands in another country it must be returned.

**Liability Convention**

This document states that a country that launches something into space is responsible if it causes damage and it entered into force on 1 September 1972. It has only been used once when the USSR satellite Kosmos 954 crashed in Canada in 1978 and left radioactive pieces across Northern Canada. Canada charged the USSR C$6 million. In 1979 NASA’s Skylab crashed in Australia and NASA was fined $400 for littering but never paid.
**Registration Convention**

In this convention each state needs to tell the UN about the orbits of all their space objects and it entered into force on 15 September 1976. Today, over 92% of all space objects are registered and you can view the online register: [http://bit.ly/25WC5mW](http://bit.ly/25WC5mW). 1200 of the objects orbiting Earth are satellites.

**Moon Agreement**

This treaty says the moon and all natural objects in space should benefit all countries and people and it entered into force on 11 July 1984. It bans military use of the moon and other natural objects in space. However, this is a failed treaty because only 5 countries have ratified it. None of the countries have space programs that can send humans into space. The main reason countries do not want to sign it because it says if a country takes resources out of space it needs to be shared with all nations.

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**The Militarization of Space**

- **All countries are allowed to put satellites into orbit. However, some countries have technology to destroy satellites. Also, are military satellites weapons?**

- **Many countries have weapons on the ground that can reach objects in space. Are those space weapons?**

- **Some countries want to create missile defence systems. Some people think these systems will also be used to attack objects in space.**

- **GPS is great for finding your way when you are lost. It is also used by militaries to target and bomb other countries.**

- **Some missiles go into space before reaching their targets. Should that be allowed?**
Guiding Questions

1. Can your country send objects into space without the help of another country? How has your country been involved in space? How might it be involved in space in the future?

2. Look at some of the treaties dealing with space. How do these treaties help keep space free from weapons? What do countries need to agree to in order to keep all weapons out of space?


4. The 3 main parts of the EU International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities are:
   - All countries have the right to use space for peaceful purposes.
   - Countries should not attack or interfere with the space objects of other countries.
   - Countries can use space for defense.

   Do you think your country could agree to these terms? Why or why not?

5. What are some reasons that countries might want weapons in space?

6. Look at the graphic on page 3. What should be considered a space weapon?

7. Research some of the ways that space debris is becoming a problem. How would weapons in space make this problem worse?
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hyperlink</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.unoosa.org/">http://www.unoosa.org/</a></td>
<td>Information about treaties and how countries work together to use space peacefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nautilus</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://nautil.us/blog/some-dead-satellites-refuse-to-go-quietly-to-their-graves">http://nautil.us/blog/some-dead-satellites-refuse-to-go-quietly-to-their-graves</a></td>
<td>Article on how space waste is becoming a problem.</td>
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<td><strong>The Space Review</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.thespacereview.com/article/2575/1">http://www.thespacereview.com/article/2575/1</a></td>
<td>Article about the problems with the Treaty proposed by Russia and China.</td>
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