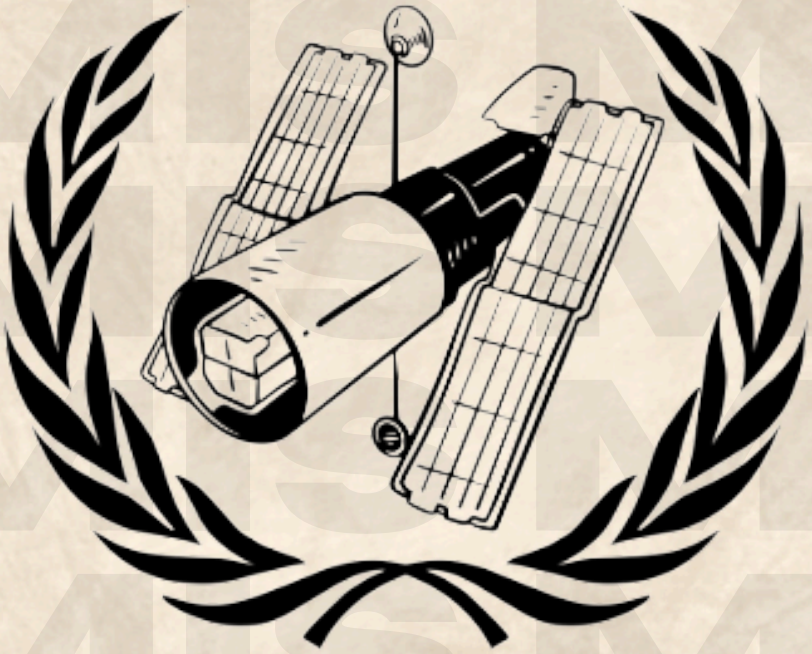
BACKGROUND GUIDE



COPUOS

COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

SMIS MUN ‘25

IMAGINE · INSPIRE · INNOVATE

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) simulation at Sancta Maria International School MUN 2025!

The Background Guide will provide you with procedural context and a **brief overview** of the agenda item. Its only intended purpose is to provide you with enough information to commence your own research, from your assigned portfolio's perspective.

If any questions arise–about committee mandate or procedure–please reach out.

Best regards,

D. Sai Srikar
Chair
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Sri Mohini
Vice-Chair
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RULES OF PROCEDURE:

This simulation will adhere to the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure, particularly those in chapter XIII concerning the conduct of debate and voting. Relevant excerpts from the rules are provided below.

Rule 108 - Quorum

The Chairman may declare a meeting open and permit the debate to proceed when at least one quarter of the members of the committee are present. The presence of a majority of the members shall be required for any decision to be taken.

Rule 109 - Speeches

No representative may address the committee without having previously obtained the permission of the Chairman. The Chairman shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak. The Chairman may call a speaker to order if his remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Rule 113 - Points of Order

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may rise to a point of order, and the point of order shall be immediately decided by the Chairman in accordance with the rules of procedure. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the Chairman. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote, and the Chairman's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the members present and voting. A representative rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Rule 114 - Time limit on speeches

The committee may limit the time to be allowed to each speaker and the number of times each representative may speak on any question. Before a decision is taken, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, a proposal to set such limits. When the debate is limited and a representative exceeds his allotted time, the Chairman shall call him to order without delay.

Rule 115 - Closing of list of speakers, right of reply

During the course of a debate, the Chairman may announce the list of speakers and, with the consent of the committee, declare the list closed. He may, however, accord the right of reply to any member if a speech delivered after he has declared the list closed makes this desirable.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Rule 116 - Adjournment of debate

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. In addition to the proposer of the motion, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, the motion, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. The Chairman may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.

Rule 117 - Closure of debate

A representative may at any time move the closure of the debate on the item under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signied his wish to speak. Permission to speak on the closure of the debate shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the closure, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. If the committee is in favour of the closure, the Chairman shall declare the closure of the debate. The Chairman may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.

Rule 118 - Suspension or adjournment of the meeting

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting. Such motions shall not be debated but shall be immediately put to the vote. The Chairman may limit the time to be allowed to the speaker moving the suspension or adjournment of the meeting.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Rule 119 - Order of procedural motions

Subject to rule 113, the motions indicated below shall have precedence in the following order over all other proposals or motions before the meeting:

(a) To suspend the meeting;

(b) To adjourn the meeting;

(c) To adjourn the debate on the item under discussion;

(d) To close the debate on the item under discussion.

Rule 122 - Withdrawal of motions

A motion may be withdrawn by its proposer at any time before voting on it has commenced, provided that the motion has not been amended. A motion thus withdrawn may be reintroduced by any member.

Rule 123 - Reconsideration of proposals

When a proposal has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same session unless the committee, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, so decides. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the motion, after which it shall be immediately put to the vote.

Rule 124 - Voting rights

Each member of the committee shall have one vote.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Rule 125 - Majority required

Decisions of committees shall be made by a majority of the members present and voting.

Rule 126 - Meaning of the phrase “members present and voting”

For the purposes of these rules, the phrase "members present and voting" means members casting an affirmative or negative vote. Members which abstain from voting are considered as not voting

Rule 127 - Method of voting

The committee shall normally vote by show of hands or by standing, but any representative may request a roll-call. The roll-call shall be taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the members. The name of each member shall be called in any roll-call, and its representative shall reply "yes", "no" or "abstention". The result of the voting shall be inserted in the record in the English alphabetical order of the names of the members.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Rule 128 - Conduct during voting

After the Chairman has announced the beginning of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting. The Chairman may permit members to explain their votes, either before or after the voting, except when the vote is taken by secret ballot. The Chairman may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations. The Chairman shall not permit the proposer of a proposal or of an amendment to explain his vote on his own proposal or amendment.

Rule 129 - Division of proposals and amendments

A representative may move that parts of a proposal or of an amendment should be voted on separately. If objection is made to the request for division, the motion for division shall be voted upon. Permission to speak on the motion for division shall be given only to two speakers in favour and two speakers against. If the motion for division is carried, those parts of the proposal or of the amendment which are approved shall then be put to the vote as a whole. If all operative parts of the proposal or of the amendment have been rejected, the proposal or the amendment shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.

RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Rule 130 - Voting on amendments

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be voted on rst. When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the committee shall rst vote on the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal and then 5 on the amendment next furthest removed therefrom, and so on until all the amendments have been put to the vote. Where, however, the adoption of one amendment necessarily implies the rejection of another amendment, the latter amendment shall not be put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted upon. A motion is considered an amendment to a proposal if it merely adds to, deletes from or revises part of the proposal.

Rule 131 - Voting on proposals

If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the committee shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The committee may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.

Rule 133 - Equally divided votes

If a vote is equally divided on matters other than elections, the proposal shall be regarded as rejected.

COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE - INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) was created in 1959 as a permanent Committee of the United Nations General Assembly with a broad mandate to promote space sciences and technology, and to study the use of space applications and the nature of legal problems relating to outer space activities. Since its creation, COPUOS has been the main forum for the discussion of space aairs on the international stage.

The Committee has two permanent Subcommittees, the Scientic and Technical Subcommittee (also known as STSC) and the Legal Subcommittee (also known as LSC), and many temporary Working Groups to address the full breadth of its mandate. The Committee and its Subcommittees in general follow the operational procedures of the United Nations including conducting its plenary meetings in the six ocial languages of the UN—Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

COPUOS had to adapt to changing political circumstances several times during its history. Through these changes it has preserved consensus rather than voting as its main working method.

Since 1994, COPUOS and its two Subcommittees have met in Vienna, Austria and this cooperative and Carefully balanced approach to deliberation and decision-making has often been referred to as the “Vienna Spirit.”

With the exception of disarmament and most security issues, COPUOS has been the forum for the development of almost all the United Nations treaties, resolutions, and other non-legally binding international instruments on space governance. COPUOS also exists as a forum for scientific and technical exchange and cooperation. The Committee annually reports on its sessions to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York and makes recommendations for issues and/or documents to be considered by the General Assembly.

Situated in the United Nations Oce at Vienna (UNOV) complex, the United Nations Oce for Outer Space Aairs (UNOOSA) is part of the UN Secretariat and has a broad mandate of its own. The most long-standing of its tasks is to provide secretariat services to COPUOS.

During its first 20 years of its existence, the Committee served as the forum for the negotiation and drafting of the five main UN space law treaties, in addition to several important UNGA resolutions.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1968 Rescue and the Return Agreement, the 1972 Liability Convention, The 1975 Registration Convention and the 1979 Moon Agreement serve today as providing the normative framework for activities in outer space, as well as an illustration of the power of COPUOS and of the UN for advancing the rule of law in outer space.

With the exception of the 1979 Moon Agreement, these treaties were quickly and widely ratified, especially by the major space-faring nations and (where possible) several international intergovernmental organizations such as the European Space Agency, which lodged declarations to take on the rights and obligations under the treaties. To date, a vast majority of the members of COPUOS have ratified—at least—the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

Along with treaty development, COPUOS also drafted a series of principles relating to various matters of space activities, including remote sensing and direct television broadcasting. These were adopted as resolutions by the General Assembly during and after the COPUOS treaty era, and parts of them may reflect emerging norms of customary law and also bear significant political weight.

In the first two decades of the 21st century, The committee has focused on the drafting of non-legally binding soft law documents. In distinction to earlier principles resolutions, the documents agreed upon during this era contain best practices and other guidelines for member States, including the registration practice for space objects, national space legislation, space debris mitigation, and other matters. Although UN resolutions, guidelines, and principles do not have the legally binding force of a treaty, many States consider them politically binding and often implement the provisions contained in them into their national regulatory frameworks for space activities. However, those documents do not provide comprehensive, legally binding regulations or legal certainty for the diverse set of space activities to be expected for the future.

Mandate

Under the Charter of the United Nations (UN), the UN General Assembly (UNGA) has the power to create subsidiary organs (Arts. 7(2), 22) and to adopt its own rules of procedure (Art. 21). Acting under these powers, the General Assembly established the permanent Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in 1959, just like it had established its ad hoc predecessor in 1958. COPUOS is thus a standing subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. It is tasked to report annually to the General Assembly on its proceedings within the bounds of its mandate and, through this report, to seek approval of its agenda for the following year.

Under the implied powers doctrine, whereby international organizations have certain unenumerated powers to give eect to their enumerated powers, the General Assembly could have provided COPUOS with powers beyond its own, if necessary to fulll its function. It did not do so, however, and therefore, COPUOS may not make internationally binding decisions in any way. COPUOS is thus subordinate to the General Assembly regarding its mandate and substantive work, as well as its rules of procedure.

COPUOS, through its Chair, now reports to the General Assembly's Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization Committee), after originally reporting to the First Committee at the time of its creation.

Consensus

On March 19, 1962, COPUOS was the rst body in the United Nations to formally adopt the consensus procedure when the Chair at the time, Ambassador Franz Matsch of Austria, stated "I should like to place on record that through informal consultations it has been agreed among the members of the Committee that it will be the aim of all members of the Committee and its sub-Committees to conduct the Committee's work in such a way that the Committee will be able to reach agreement in its work without need for voting."

A clear definition of consensus is subtle. According to the Max Planck Encyclopedia of International Law, from a procedural point of view, consensus is a procedure for adopting a decision or a statement without proceeding to a formal vote when there are no formal objections. Nobody involved in that decision-making process has to manifest positively its agreement with the decision to be taken; the only requirement is that no formal objection is voiced. Consequently, a General Assembly resolution adopted by consensus is not necessarily accepted by all members. Rather, it is simply not rejected by any members.

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Decisions taken through consensus are different from the practice of adoption without a vote. The deliberation of a decision based on consensus begins by referring to a statement, document, or paragraph thereof and, upon no formal objection being voiced, the ocer of the Bureau leading the deliberation proclaims “it is so decided.” The proposition in question is thereafter considered adopted.

Some commentators believe COPUOS consensus rule constrains the ability of the Committee to maintain its relevance and eectiveness in a rapidly changing global space environment. It is disputed whether the Committee may legally deviate from its cardinal decision-making rule without achieving consensus on the very need to change this rule.

AGENDA:

SPIN-OFF BENEFITS OF SPACE TECHNOLOGY: REVIEW OF CURRENT STATUS

This item has been on the Committee's agenda since 1989. It allows the consideration and sharing of information on technologies, which were originally developed for space activities, but had been adapted by/ for other non-spatial industries, programs and policies as well. NASA produces an annual report summarizing current developments in this respect, which is presented for the consideration of the Committee.

Although space research is designed primarily to explore space, many of the technological innovations can be used in everyday applications, outside the space industry. Descriptions of a few applications are provided below:

Agriculture - Space-based technology is of value to farmers, agronomists, food manufacturers and agricultural policymakers who wish to simultaneously enhance production and protability. Remote sensing satellites provide key data for monitoring soil, snow cover, drought and crop development. Rainfall assessments from satellites, for example, help farmers plan the timing and amount of irrigation they will need for their crops.

Accurate information and analysis can also help predict a region's agricultural output well in advance and can be critical in anticipating and mitigating the effects of food shortages and famines.

Global health - Space technology has a significant impact on global health in various ways. The outer space sector serves as a catalyst for advancing medical knowledge and technology transfer, yielding new vaccines, healthcare tools, and procedures. Satellite communications enhance tele-medicine and tele-health, connecting medical experts with underserved regions. Tele-epidemiology, based on remote sensing data, aids disease tracking, particularly in developing nations. During health crises, space-derived information aids emergency response, facilitating population mapping, medication distribution, transportation planning, and sanitation management.

Environment - Space-based technologies have enhanced scientific understanding of water cycles, air quality, forests, and other aspects of the natural environment. These surveying and monitoring tools provide valuable information on the state of ecosystems, which offers objective support for positive environmental action, including conservation and sustainable resource management.

Disaster Management -
Space-based technologies can contribute to all phases of the disaster management cycle, including prevention, preparedness, early warning, response, and reconstruction. Before a disaster takes place, remotely sensed data provides information for systems and models that can predict disasters and provide early warnings. Satellites are also reliable and rapid communication, observation, and positioning tools, which become particularly vital to relief and recovery operations when ground based infrastructure is damaged.

The United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) was established in 2006 under the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA). UN-SPIDER develops solutions to address the limited access developing countries have to specialized technologies that can be essential in the management of disasters and the reducing of disaster risks.

Education - Technologies like web and videoconferencing and voice over Internet protocol allow educators and students to create virtual classrooms, regardless of physical locations. Other versions of distance learning allow learners to access web based course materials on their own schedules, and communication between students and teachers may take place through e-mails, message boards, or video recordings.

Tele-education has become so popular that many institutions worldwide now offer distance education options ranging from the simplest instruction to degree and doctoral programs. Beyond facilitating programme delivery, space also plays an inspirational role in education. Classes on space topics often spark students' curiosity and imagination and encourage youth of both genders to become increasingly involved in the sciences.

Transportation - Global Navigation Satellite Systems are technologies which use Earth-orbiting satellites, networks of ground control stations, and receivers to calculate positions by triangulation. Global Navigation Satellite Systems, such as the American Global Positioning System and the Russian GLONASS, provide extremely accurate positioning and navigation information, which is relied upon in aviation, maritime, rail and road transit.

Communication - While Earth-based alternatives to space technologies are sometimes possible, space-based technology can often reduce infrastructure requirements and oer more cost eective service delivery options. For instance, instead of constructing a series of transmission and relay towers to broadcast television programmes to far-to-reach places, one satellite dish could be provided to a remote community to pick up broadcast signals sent from a satellite.

Sample speeches-

https://www.unoosa.org/documents/pdf/copuos/2023/Statements/5_PM/9_UK_5_Jun_PM.pdf

https://vienna.usmission.gov/on-spin-o-benets-of-space-technology/

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Draft report on agenda -

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