COPOUS: Space Debris

Hi there delegates! My name is Haley Christian and I am junior that has been in the MUN program for 3 years. I am on the golf team, part of the IB program and take part in many clubs including but not limited to NHS, SHS and the debate team. I'm looking forward to moderating a great discussion at the conference!

I. Background

According to NASA's databases, there are more than 500,000 pieces of space debris in the Earth's orbit that are able to be detected. The rise in the amount of space junk present increases the risk of space stations and satellites, as the average piece of debris moves at a rate of 17,500 miles per hour. The countries that have invested in a space program, spending roughly $330 billion per year, have begun to grow increasingly anxious as they realize their equipment in outer space are in jeopardy of being ruined or damaged. It is recorded that a Russian satellite collided with an active American satellite in 2009, causing for the objects to become 2,000 pieces of debris. Because of this and many other examples of a similar scenario, the destruction of one country's property from another increases the international tension, weakening countries' cooperation outside of their borders. For example, the French government received word that their satellite had been struck and destroyed by debris from one of their abandoned rockets that was inactive for roughly 10 years. Like the French, many countries, such as the US and Russia, have faced similar struggles that would deter each respective countries ability to explore space and collect data on what is unknown. With unrestricted objects flying around in space, countries that have invested in space programs gamble their investment as they have no way of ensuring their equipment's protection.

II. UN Involvement

The United Nations has been involved in their attempts to tackle the harmful effects of space debris. In 2008, the General Assembly gathered and approved resolution 62/217, which allowed the Space Debris Migration Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to search for a way to design and produce spacecraft that would be limited on their time spent in space. They hoped that forcing the missions of the space instruments would decrease the creation of space debris as the equipment would be returned to Earth after a set time instead of remaining in space until they are inactivated or destroyed. Additionally, the GA called for the spacecraft to be a minimum of 1,000 miles away from Earth's atmosphere in an attempt to keep the satellites far enough away to reduce the possibility of them entering Earth's orbit. Also, The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has held an annual meeting where countries and their representatives join each other in a discussion where they share the developments they have made in their research to reduce the amount of space debris. UNOOSA has taken all of what the countries have shared and made it public on their website in order aid the international community in their attempts to protect their property in space from flying objects.

III. Possible Solutions

In order to solve this issue, it would be wise for the international community to create a fund that specifically goes towards the development and production of space equipment that can endure the impact of the majority of space debris, as much of the space junk is as big as a penny. It is necessary that the spacecraft that is launched into the final frontier is durable and can endure travelling through Earth's atmosphere. The information collected by sending spacecraft up into space benefits the global community as the data obtained may be shared with other countries. Also, more meetings should be held to discuss the role space debris plays on space programs and how countries plan on aiding plans to make space debris less of a threat on space stations and satellites.

IV. Country Bloc Positions

African: Beings that Africa is overall a developing continent, the countries that make up its composition have yet to invest in a space program. Beings that they will be so far behind the development of other countries, their future space explorations run the greater risk of being destroyed by space debris as years of junk has accumulated.

Western: The West has been greatly affected by and has contributed to the production of space debris in outer space as this region has been in the race to space since the beginning of countries' spacecraft developments. Because of this, much of the West has been affected by space debris because of their seniority in the program.

Asia/Pacific: Asian countries have been able to create the most advanced technology in spacecraft. With this, many of these countries are very active in launching their equipment. Much like the Western countries, Asia/Pacific is very affected by space debris as they have a prominent role in space exploration.

Europe: European countries also play an important role in space exploration and, seeing the dangers of the accumulation of space debris, have involved themselves in developing ways to retrieve their own waste in space.

Middle East: Some Middle Eastern countries are in the early developmental steps of their space programs. Beings that they are not a leading region in space exploration, they have not had the chance to be realty affected by the damaging effects of space debris like many of the other regions mentioned previously.

V. Questions to Consider

1. What role has you country played in space exploration and the development of a space program?

2. How has your country's involvement affected the amount of space debris present in space?

3. Has your country been directly affected by space debris?

4. What is your country's position on the issue of space debris?

5. Has your country been involved in the development of solutions to make space debris less problematic?

VI. Works Cited

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