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Thursday, April 23, 2009**NEO CONFERENCE - COPUOS ACTION TEAM-14 STATUS**

Dr. Sergio Camacho, Secretary General of the [Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (CRECTEALC) presented on the subject of Action Team-14, a group established within the UN [Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space](#) (COPUOS) for purposes of addressing the NEO threat.

Dr. Camacho described how the UN, COPUOS, and Action Team-14 functions, particularly how matters related to the NEO threat will likely be addressed within the UN bureaucracy.

The NEO issue became a UN matter in 1999 with the adoption of UNISPACE III recommendations. COPUOS then looked for a mechanism to address the matter, and after a year of discussion, in 2001, formed Action Team-14 within the [Scientific and Technical Subcommittee](#) of COPUOS (though at the time, "Action Team" was not the official designation). Thirty-three recommendations from UNISPACE III, it turns out, ultimately served as the impetus for the establishment of several action teams.

Action Team-14 followed its work according to two phases: an Assessment Phase and an Implementation Phase. In the Assessment Phase, Action Team-14 assessed existing intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) capable of addressing the NEO threat. An interim report was submitted to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee during its 2009 Session, where, in fact, the [NEO Report recommendations by the Association of Space Explorers](#) mentioned earlier in today's conference were presented. In fact, the ASE Report was identified as an ideal foundation for further work. Among other things, the Action Team-14 interim report also included NASA's new objective to scan the skies for NEOs by 2020. In the end, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee formally endorsed the work being conducted by Action Team-14, a critical step in insuring that further international coordination on NEOs continues.

Action Team-14 will develop draft recommendations for the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the international response to the NEO threat by 2010. If endorsed by the Subcommittee, the recommendations pass on for consideration by COPUOS. If COPUOS endorses the recommendations, they move on to the UN General Assembly for consideration.

Dr. Adigun Ade Abiodun of Nigeria (UN Expert on Space Applications) asked about the role of the COPUOS Legal Subcommittee role in this regard; that is, would the work of Action Team-14 need to go through the Legal Subcommittee in addition to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee before being formally presented to COPUOS? Dr. Camacho indicated this is not necessarily the case. In point of fact, the Legal Subcommittee has not worked on the NEO matter in any substantial way, at least not yet. The concern is that because of this situation, coordination is necessary. It was also asked if the orbital debris mitigation efforts being undertaken by both subcommittees is a model. Dr. Camacho indicated that this would not be a good template, mainly because there was much opposition to including mitigation of orbital debris as an agenda item, whereas the NEO threat is largely supported. Further, Dr. Ray Williamson (SWF Executive Director) pointed out that in the orbital debris instance, the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) is a different sort of NGO than ASE, whose report is being considered the foundation for further NEO work. In the former case, the IADC proposed voluntary guidelines were formally adopted by COPUOS in 2007. Finally, Rusty Schweickart pointed out that the IADC guidelines are much more specific that the recommendations presented in the ASE Report, meaning the NEO effort is not as controversial.

The Implementation Phase, of course, remains as a future objective.

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