

## LASALLECUNMUN 2025

# COPUOS

(Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) "Use of Nuclear energy sources in space and spatial militarization"

### **Background Guide**





Dear delegates,

I am, Kamila Juara and I am very pleased to welcome you to LASALLECUNMUN. It is a pleasure for me to introduce myself as president of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, accompanied by two incredible people: Diana Zamora, as my conference officer, and Astrid Tavera, as my moderator.

Currently, I am 16 years old and I am in my third semester of high school at La Salle University in Cancun. In my free time, I really enjoy, drawing, dancing, and hanging out with my friends. Personally, I am not someone who studies a lot, but to be part of MUN (Model United Nations), one requires quite a bit of preparation, and I took that as a personal challenge since it is not my style. My style is more about having everything ready at the last moment, but for MUN, one has to be punctual and not leave everything until the last minute (as I always do). I am a person with a very clear vision of my future; I know what I want to study and where. My experience in MUN has been incredible, and that's why I encourage you to get involved in how exciting it can be. At first, I didn't realize how passionate I would become about MUN, but over time you realize that it's not just about debate after debate; there are many topics we need to address, research, question, and discuss. In MUN, you can make a significant difference and tackle everyday issues. I have participated in only one MUN model, which has been a very meaningful experience in my life. In my first model, I represented Belarus and couldn't believe that dealing with such a delicate topic would have a great impact on my life. It really changed a lot about how I see things, and since then my desire to continue in MUN has only grown, despite the fact that I didn't like MUN at first. My perspective changed so much from my experience in a committee that I became so passionate about it that now I have the honor of being the president of this wonderful committee.

With all my heart, I wish that all of you have unforgettable experiences in your models. Always remember that anything we do can generate a great change in society and that education is the most powerful weapon to transform the world. Don't stop, keep preparing and striving every day to be better. I hope you enjoy this committee as much as I enjoy planning it. Remember that preparation is vital to enjoy the debate and have an idea of the main point of the topic. I wish you all the best and trust me, you can do it. In case of any doubts, please feel free to ask me. You, the delegates, are what will make the Committee of this year on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space special, so I wish you all success in this LASALLECUNMUN2025.

#### Kamila Juara Sequeira

#### **Committee On the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)**

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#### **COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION**

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) was set up by the General Assembly in 1959 to govern the exploration and use of space for the benefit of all humanity: for peace, security, and development, while also addressing the increasing complexities and challenges posed by advancements in space technology and the growing interest of both developed and developing nations in utilizing outer space for various purposes. The Committee was tasked with reviewing international cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space, studying space-related activities that could be undertaken by the United Nations, encouraging space research programs, and studying legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space.

#### Topic: "Use of Nuclear energy sources in space and spatial militarization "

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The use of nuclear energy in space and the militarization of space are interrelated issues that have gained relevance in recent decades. Space, once considered a domain of peaceful and scientific cooperation, is being transformed by the combination of two worrying trends: the use of nuclear energy and militarization. As space powers advance their technologies, space is no longer just a place for exploration and innovation, but a potential field of geopolitical conflict. Nuclear energy, for example, has been essential for long-term missions such as Mars exploration and the operation of deep space probes, thanks to its ability to generate energy sustainably in environments where other sources are not viable.

However, this same technological advance for peaceful purposes has a downside. Nuclear energy, due to its high energy density and durability, can also be used to develop nuclear weapons in space or to power military defense systems in orbit, such as nuclear-powered satellites with offensive capabilities. The risk is real and growing. If nations decide to militarize space using nuclear technologies, there is a danger of triggering a space arms race. Tests of anti-satellite weapons have already been carried out, and several countries have developed satellites for military purposes. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty explicitly prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons in orbit, but gaps in its regulation and rapid technological evolution raise doubts about its ability to maintain peace in this new scenario.

The same technology that could lead us to colonize Mars or build bases on the Moon is also the one that could become a devastating weapon, placed miles above our heads. If the international community does not establish clear and effective boundaries, space, the last bastion of human cooperation, could become the next global battlefield.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The use of nuclear energy in outer space and the possible idea of space militarization began at the end of the Second World War and in 1947, at the beginning of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The first uses of nuclear energy date back to the creation of nuclear bombs in the armed conflict between Japan and the United States. However, at the beginning of the Cold War is when the space race was noticed in all its splendor.

The use of nuclear energy for space-related activities occurred for the first time in 1961 in the United States when it used isotope generators to produce nuclear electrical energy to meet the power and heating needs of 21 spacecraft. Of the 21 satellite launches carried out by the United States, three were aborted, ending in accidents. It was precisely this situation that led to this issue being addressed for the first time in 1972, since the use of nuclear energy sources in outer space began to have great importance due to the impact it could generate both in space and on the earth, since the uncontrolled dissemination of radioactive material used to generate energy for a space object can produce radiological dangers for humans, animals and even airspace.

Leaving aside the risks that nuclear energy has brought to society, it is important to raise the possibility that it plays a vital role in space militarization, since since the Cold War, the great powers have taken the step of putting into orbit satellites powered by nuclear energy that can attack and destroy adversary space devices. The consequences for those who suffer these attacks can be catastrophic, because their communications, navigation and defense systems will be partially or totally disabled. This scenario raises, as in nuclear war, the possibility of a preventive attack aimed at avoiding being left in the hands of the adversary in a possible war conflict. The United States and Russia have the capacity to carry out these actions, and consequently the rest try to follow the great powers, since they are the ones that dictate the rules of the system. However, from this the rule is deduced that whoever dominates space will dominate the Earth in a war conflict.

The Outer Space Treaty, signed in 1967 by the United States, prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons or any type of weapons of mass destruction in outer space and the stationing of such weapons on celestial bodies. However, it is necessary to clarify that, although nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in space are prohibited, there is no limitation on the installation of conventional weapons on space satellites or the peaceful use of nuclear energy, also it does not address all forms of militarization.

In this sense, it is necessary to analyze the possibility of contemplating new regulations, since although the principles provide a fundamental basis and determine how the use of nuclear energy sources should be carried out, they are not sufficient, since we are faced with an activity that is gaining more momentum every day and therefore must eventually enjoy complimentary regulation. After all, this technology is constantly evolving, and the Law of Outer Space is also a Law in progressive development.

#### **CURRENT SITUATION**

The current conflict in space revolves around the militarization of outer space and the use of nuclear energy for military purposes. As space-faring nations advance their technologies, what was once a domain of peace is increasingly becoming a potential geopolitical battleground. Concerns are rising over the use of nuclear technologies by nations to develop space weapons, which could trigger an arms race in space. Although the 1967 Outer Space Treaty prohibits nuclear weapons in orbit, regulatory gaps and rapid technological advancements raise doubts about its effectiveness in maintaining peace in this new context.

#### UN Opinions and Recommendations

The United Nations, through its Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), urgently calls for clear and effective limits on the military use of space. It recommends strengthening existing legal frameworks to address new technological realities and prevent space from becoming a battlefield. International cooperation is deemed essential to ensure that space remains an area for peaceful collaboration rather than military confrontation.

#### **Recent Events and Reactions**

Several significant events in recent years have heightened tensions:

- Anti-Satellite Weapon Tests: Various countries have demonstrated their ability to destroy enemy satellites, raising concerns about potential military escalation.
- Military Satellite Development: Advances by nations such as the United States and Russia in offensive capabilities may further destabilize international security.
- International Reactions: These actions have sparked concerns among other nations, leading to calls for stronger dialogue on space disarmament and stricter regulations.

Consequences include increased distrust among nations and a heightened risk of armed conflicts related to space control.

#### Possible Consequences

If effective regulations are not established, alarming consequences may arise:

- Space Arms Race: The militarization of space could lead to intense competition among nations for dominance in this domain.
- Geopolitical Conflicts: The likelihood of armed conflicts may increase if countries feel compelled to act preemptively to protect their interests.

#### **COUNTRY BOX**

Commonwealth of Australia

Dominion of Canada

Federal Republic of Germany

Federative Republic of Brazil

French Republic

Grand Duchy of Luxemburg

Islamic Republic of Iran

Italian Republic

Japan

Kingdom of Spain

Kingdom of Audi Sarabia

People's Republic of China

Republic of Korea

Republic of India

Republic of Türkiye

**Russian Federation** 

State of Israel

United Arab Emirates

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

United States of America

#### **GUIDE QUESTIONS**

- I. What is your country's position on the militarization of space and the use of nuclear energy in this context?
- II. What actions has your country taken to address the risks associated with the militarization of space and the use of nuclear energy?
- III. What consequences has your country or the international community faced due to the lack of effective regulations in space?
- IV. What solutions does your country propose to ensure the peaceful use of space and prevent an arms race in space?
- V. How can your country contribute to fostering international cooperation in the peaceful use of space?

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