# THE FIFTY-SIXTH ANNUAL NORTH AMERICAN INVITATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Dear Delegates and Moderators,

Welcome to NAIMUN LVI and more specifically welcome to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The staff of NAIMUN LVI has been working day and night to make this the most rewarding and educational experience yet, and we are excited to welcome you all to DC in February!

This document is the topic abstract for the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. It contains three key elements to allow you all to prepare well in advance for the committee: topics, structure, and research avenues. The goal of this abstract is to give you a better understanding of the content in the committee. As well, it is meant to be a launch point for further research about the content of this committee. By reading and understanding the topic abstract, you will more fully get a sense of how this committee will be run at NAIMUN and what specific issues the NAIMUN staff want you to focus on.

We hope to be of assistance to you in your preparation for NAIMUN LVI. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact the Secretary-General or Director-General. We look forward to welcoming you to the NAIMUN family!

Best,
Chase and Charlotte

**Chase Wagers**
*Secretary-General*
c.wagers@modelun.org

**Charlotte Phillips**
*Director-General*
c.phillips@modelun.org

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# Topic Abstract: COPUOS

## Introduction

Often considered the final frontier for exploration, modern technology is rapidly making outer space more accessible. States are increasingly dependent on their space-based assets such as satellites; likewise, the global economy and our way of life are enabled by these assets. An increasing number of states are also investing in making space travel more cost-effective, working on projects including lowering the costs of launching satellites, conducting zero-gravity research, and ensuring the future of deep space exploration. Prospects such as the colonization of other planets or the development of ever more disaggregated satellite networks for increased security are becoming a new reality, but it is important to remember that the industry surrounding space was only born in the early 1960s with a few wealthy states having access to the resource. Today, with increased resource dedication and technology development, less wealthy states have unprecedented access to space.

It is also important to remember that with increased reliance on space comes with its own set of risks. With more man-made objects in space, chances of collisions or the creation of debris increase. With states more dependent on their space-based assets for vital functions, the cost of potential attacks on vital reconnaissance or communications satellites also increases. As states increase dependence on space, they also must create a plan to ensure their own security and a sustainable future.
As a part of this Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space within the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs, solutions to issues that are facing all countries with interests in outer space must be faced. Though not all states necessarily have space capabilities, these issues still apply to all states based along the lines of their alliances in today's geopolitical frontier.

## Topic A: Space Debris

Though a common topic in space-focused committees, this committee hopes to offer a unique twist to space debris. There are currently more than 500,000 pieces of debris tracked in Earth's orbit today and this debris poses large risks to a future in space. Defined as natural (ex. asteroid) or artificial (ex. pieces of old satellites), space debris pose large risks to the existing infrastructure that is present in space as well as future satellites, spacecraft, and missions into Earth's orbit. Though the probability of a collision is low, approximately 300,000 pieces of debris exist of sufficient size to destroy a satellite upon collision. Threats from space debris collision include failure of the satellite-reliant global positioning system, which could disrupt emergency response services, cripple global banking systems, interrupt electric power grids, and hinder military capacities, which have become increasingly reliant on these technologies.

When it comes to the issue of space debris, the international community is currently focused around debris mitigation and debris clean-up programs. One question that has largely been ignored is the idea of how to extend property rights into space in terms of space debris. Under what circumstances does debris belong to a single country? Since it is so difficult to track space debris, how can we know who is responsible for its future clean up? How does this idea of property rights and extended responsibility into space play a role in the mitigation of space debris in the future?

It is the duty of this committee to understand the current scope of the space debris issue in the status quo, how it will continue to be a problem into the future as humans increase their activity in Earth orbit and beyond, as well as look into how the problem of space debris can begin to be 'solved' in the future.

## Topic B: Militarization of Space

Space has long been a realm for states to demonstrate their technological capabilities and superiority. This pattern dates back to the late 1950s, when the United States and

the Soviet Union used the "Space Race" as another field on which to fight the Cold War. This trend continues today in a less obvious sense. Rather than two states dueling it out, space has become increasingly militarized and an arena for the show of force by many states around the world.
Whether it be through the deployment of spy satellites or the testing of weapons in space, countries have begun the development of weapons for use in space. The militarization of space can also be seen through the disruption of a states' space-based capabilities by another such as satellite jamming or disruption.

The Outer Space Treaty considered by the UN Legal Subcommittee in 1966 is one of the most significant pieces of legislation on the rules of space. Though it briefly touches upon the militarization of space, there are many provisions that need to be updated to meet with the current challenges of the time. With tests of ballistic missiles and ASATs occurring, the militarization of space is a pressing issue and it is often better to have international law in place regulating warfare of all types, then having the law be responsive to such actions.

It is the duty of this committee to consider all actions that are occurring on the front of space militarization and work to create international precedent to protect states from attacks of their assets in space.

## Resources for Further Research

1. "Where Did All That Space Debris Come From?": https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/where-did-all-that-space-debris-come-from/
   Good introduction to the problem of space debris.
2. "Space Debris": https://www.mercatus.org/system/files/Salter-Space-Debris.pdf
   Another introduction to the topic.
3. Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space: http://www.unoosa.org/pdf/publications/st_space_49E.pdf

Current UNOOSA action and guidelines for space debris.

4. UNOOSA Space Debris Page:
   http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/topics/space-debris/index.html
   Important and beneficial to see the UN's current perspectives on the issue.
5. Militarization and Weaponization of Outer Space:
   http://www.globalissues.org/article/69/militarization-and-weaponization-of-outer-space
   Though this is a forum page, it includes many of links to great documents to look into for the militarization of space.
6. "Space law revisited : The militarization of outer space":
   https://medium.com/law-and-policy/space-law-revisited-the-militarization-of-outer-space-d65df7359515
   Interesting legal perspective on the militarization of space.
7. Defining and Regulating the Weaponization of Space:
   http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-74/jfq-74_110-115_DeFrieze.pdf
   Great overview of the issue of space militarization.