TAEMUN VII

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BACKGROUND GUIDE

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

Topic A: Privatization of Outer Space Exploration

Topic B: Compensation for the Effects of Atomic Radiation Resulting from Nuclear Accidents

Directors: Andrew Alonzo, Christina Bujoreanu

TAEMUN VII
Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Distinguished Delegates,

My name is Andrew Alonzo, and I will be serving as one of your directors for the Special Political and Decolonization Committee here at TAEMUN VII. I am currently a junior at Thomas A. Edison High School, and this is my first year in Model UN, although, I have participated in a form of model legislature when I was younger. Outside of MUN, I am an avid language learner (I speak five and am learning a sixth currently), an adventurous traveler, an IB Diploma Candidate, and a member of the National Honor Society. I am so excited to meet everyone at TAEMUN VII, and I wish you all the very best of luck!

Sincerely,

Andrew Alonzo

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TAEMUN VII
Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Dear Delegates,

I am Christina Bujoreanu, and I will be serving as a co-director for this year's Special Political and Decolonization Committee at TAEMUN VII. I am a sophomore here at Thomas A. Edison High School and am in my first year in Model UN; however, I have had experience in foreign affairs. I am a well-traveled individual and have traveled to over 13 different countries, many of which to visit family and learn about my culture. I am also trilingual and am currently learning a fourth language. I am also a part of the Global STEM Program at my school and am a student ambassador for my class in the Program. In addition, I am also a student ambassador for Virginia for the Technovation Girls Global Challenge. Furthermore, I am also a volleyball player but am out for another 4 months due to an ACL surgery. I look forward to meeting all of you, and good luck to you all!

Sincerely,

Christina Bujoreanu

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Topic A: Privatization of Outer Space Exploration

Background

With the USSR's successful launch of the Sputnik 1 satellite into space on October 4th, 1957, the 'Space Race,' as it would soon be commonly known as, commenced. On April 12th, 1961, a one hour, 48-minute mission conducted by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), known as the Vostok 1, successfully carried Soviet astronaut Yuri Gagarin around one orbit of the Earth. After the successful Vostok 1 mission, the United States of America then set out to, not only send a man around space, but onto the moon. On July 20th, 1969, Neil Armstrong, under the guidance of Buzz Aldrin, was the first human in history to take the first steps on the moon. His quote, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" is now a phrase that is recognizable by people all over the world. These three pivotal events from 1957 to 1969 have changed humanity's view on outer space exploration and initiated an international movement to venture far from the Earth's surface for generations to come.

The rapidly globalizing world is currently going through a technological and scientific renaissance. New technology has made it significantly easier to venture far into the reaches of Outer Space. The space-age has revolutionized the world, but it also led us dangerously close to nuclear war. There have been some regulations put in place for outer space exploration through treaties such as the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, but none concerning the privatization of its exploration. Many defense companies such as Lockheed Martin, have recently partnered with NASA to mine for resources in outer space. With many new space companies being established by tycoons such as Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin, many are

beginning to wonder: will this unknown-to-mankind part of the universe benefit society, or only be used as a playground for the very wealthy?

Current Situation

In terms of private companies exploring the depths of outer space, there currently is no direct regulation on their possible venture into the unknown. Several treaties have been ratified and put into place, but none of them necessarily deal with this influx of innovation from technology powerhouses. According to NASA's *Public-Private Partnerships for Space Capability Development*, certain companies are importing their cargo into space via the International Space Station and are mining asteroids in hopes of gaining precious resources. Additionally, failure to deliver during public-private dealings has led to distrust between both the public and private sectors. Time and time again, private companies and their possible collaboration with national governments have been a concern brought up by many leaders and scientists. Though private space exploration companies are on the rise, there is no true sort of international regulation that can prevent any sort of exploitation.

Past United Nations Actions

The *Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*, which is more commonly known as the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, was ratified by the General Assembly in its 21st Session. This treaty set the foundation for what would become international outer space law. It set a precedent for common regulations of outer space that are still in place today. For example, Article IV's clear

interpretation on the prohibition of establishing military bases or storing any missiles in outer space is still recognized by the international community. In addition, Article II clearly states that, “Outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means,” making it clear that there is no such permission for any nation or corporation to act on the behalf of any nation's interest, to begin colonizing or claiming any sort of sovereignty over any part of outer space. In 2004, however, the United States of America, with the purpose of the promotion of commercial human flight into space, legalized commercialized space exploration. Additionally, in 2016, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg set forth policies that would entitle private companies to whatever resources gained during space mining, which has led many to consider that Luxembourg is potentially taking advantage of the newness of this vast unknown.

Questions to Consider

1. To what extent, if any, should private space companies or governments be allowed to establish colonies on other planets?
2. What policies can, or should, the United Nations place on the regulation of outer space trade?
3. How can unethical practices be prevented in space both by private companies and other governments?
4. How can the potential weaponization of space be defined and how can it be prevented?

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Topic B: Compensation for the Effects of Atomic Radiation Resulting from Nuclear Accidents

Background

In lieu of natural gas that secretes CH_4 (methane) into the atmosphere, a cleaner, safer, and more reliable source of energy is being used much more. Nuclear energy is safe and affordable, however, one small mishap when handling nuclear energy may cause an excruciatingly devastating accident that will ravage communities for decades, even centuries, to come. What is produced as a byproduct of nuclear energy is commonly called a high-level waste, or HLW for short. No longer are these HLWs strong enough to produce energy, so they're sent to reactors to cool off. However, nowhere in the world is there safe, long-term disposal areas for these HLWs. Additionally, nuclear reactor sites that produce radioactive waste are extremely susceptible to any sort of natural disaster and abuse of these sites by radical groups. Plutonium has a half-life of 24,000 years through α-decay. In comparison, ancient Mesopotamia was founded over 12,000 years ago. As the world's energy supply has been greatly diversifying, so have the inherent risks that come with it. The world's worst nuclear accident, Chernobyl, took place in 1986 in Ukraine. To this day, many are living with the effects of this radiation, ranging from cancer, infertility, and major disabilities. Charities such as the UN-accredited Chernobyl Children International provide aid to harder-hit areas. Atomic radiation effects do not go away overnight, and their immense damage to societies is of extreme concern, and even if cleanup of the site will be complete by 2065, the effects of this radiation will be felt for centuries, if not millennia.

Current Situation

On the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES), both the Chernobyl and Fukushima incidents received and currently are the only incidents holding Level 7 ratings, the highest and most catastrophic.

April 26th, 1986 was the date of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, currently known as the largest nuclear accident in human history. During a nuclear reactor test, an RBMK-type reactor had its safety systems disabled, and this caused extremely uncontrollable nuclear fission reactions, which releases several million times more energy into the atmosphere than a normal chemical reaction would. This led to 237 people dying due to acute radiation syndrome (ARS), a type of radiation poisoning that is extremely lethal, and, to this day, many still suffer the health effects caused by this devastating amount of radiation. Originally, the Soviet government had planned to withhold this incident from the international community, but the impact had been much more significant than they had expected.

In 2011, Japan experienced a massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake, followed by a tsunami. The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant had its cooling system rendered non-functional due to the severe impact by the earthquake. Its cooling system failed, and subsequently, large amounts of radiation seeped into the atmosphere. The loss of coolant because of the earthquake was the primary reason that Fukushima also suffered from three nuclear meltdowns and three hydrogen explosions. The World Meteorological Organization provided help to Japan on an Ad hoc basis, and many other nations reached out on an individual basis to assist in cleanup.

Past United Nations Actions

Under the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), all states have both the responsibility of non-proliferation and gradual disarmament. Each state, according to the NPT, have the right to use nuclear energy peacefully for national interest means. Many not-for-profit organizations were set up with the goal of aiding Chernobyl victims, and the International Atomic Energy Agency set up the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) has released publications detailing the risks and effects of the world's major nuclear disasters and have worked diligently in assessing the effects of ionizing radiation after every major nuclear incident. Additionally, Second General Assembly resolution 45/190 was the catalyst for the Soviet Union's receiving of international help in order to clean Chernobyl. Japan, on the other hand, received help from its allies almost right away, and many local corporations aided in the cleanup in whatever way possible. Additionally, the health effects of ionizing radiation are extreme and usually end up leading to ARS, cancer, or death. Under the NPT, however, any sort of abuse of nuclear power is of little concern, and because of Chernobyl and Fukushima, nations have now become more equipped than ever to combat the devastating effects of atomic radiation and compensate victims while also working to repair the local economy.

Questions to Consider

1. Do the pros of nuclear energy outweigh the cons of it?
2. How can a nation prevent a catastrophic nuclear accident from happening again?

3. In a quickly globalizing society, nuclear weapons are being amassed by large nations. How will the misuse of these powerful devices be prevented?
4. How can the UN and other international organizations safely and successfully manage these nuclear powerhouses and their waste receptacles?

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