

Canada, together with many other members of the Outer Space Committee, continues to believe that there is no necessity at the present time to formulate a legal definition of outer space. The absence of such a definition has not thus far posed any practical problem and indeed a definition might even create difficulties at a time of rapidly evolving space technology. The USSR has submitted to the Committee a proposal that establishes the boundary between air space and outer space at a distance not higher than 100 to 110 km. from earth. One aim of the Soviet Union in establishing a definition at this time may be to prevent States from making claims to portions of outer space, a practice generally considered to be prohibited by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. An example of such a claim is the contention by some equatorial States that they have the right to exercise sovereignty over the segments of geostationary orbits which occur over their territories, even though satellites in such orbits are approximately 35,000 km. above the earth.

In 1980, Canada is expected to focus on the development of a regime governing the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. In addition to this subject, discussions will continue on remote sensing, direct broadcast by satellites, and the delimitation of outer space. Issues which can be expected to emerge in the next few years include possible controls over the development of weapons that can be used in outer space, the planned 1982 UN Outer Space Conference, safety aspects of the return to earth of outer space objects, and possible improvements to the structure of the Outer Space Committee and its Sub-Committee to promote improved efficiency.