

No. 63/9 Statement of Canadian Permanent Representative  
H.E. Paul Tremblay in the First Committee of  
the General Assembly, December 5, 1963

...Canada is most satisfied with the arrangements in the preparation of which the United Nations has played a central role, intended to establish internationally agreed upon procedures for the exploration and use of outer space. Outer space, so recently opened for discovery, could, if we are not careful, become a cause for conflict between nations. We can all remember how in recent centuries nations competed and even fought over who was to control newly-explored territories. Hopefully, through the United Nations, we can arrange for co-operative exploration and use of outer space, so that from the first this co-operation will become a factor binding men and nations together rather than dividing them one from the other.

Our debate this year on the peaceful uses of outer space takes place just after one of the most auspicious developments - perhaps the most auspicious development - in the process of bringing international order in outer space. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, meeting less than a fortnight ago, gave its approval to a draft declaration of legal principles governing the exploration and use of outer space which represents the first significant step in drafting space law. This achievement brought to a successful conclusion two years of vigorous discussion in the Outer Space Committee and its Legal Sub-Committee. In the course of this discussion agreement was first reached on the need for drafting a set of principles and subsequently a consensus emerged as to the principles which were ripe for immediate inclusion in a draft declaration. The Canadian Delegation considers it most fitting that the Outer Space Committee should have met on November 22 to complete this important work.

Reference has been made in the statement of the Representative of the U.A.R. on December 2 to "reservations" of the Canadian Delegation expressed in the Outer Space Committee on November 22. I should prefer to describe the comments made by the Canadian representative as the expression of a "viewpoint" - to adopt the alternative formula used in the Committee's report. The Canadian Delegation regards the draft declaration of principles, as is noted in the Additional Report of the Outer Space Committee (A/5541 Add. 1), as "the maximum area of agreement possible at this time". What the Canadian Delegation wished to do in expressing its point of view on the draft declaration was to suggest how the existing principles might be elaborated when the time comes for doing so. That statement is on record, attached to the Report, and there is no need for me to recapitulate it.

...The draft declaration which is before this Committee for its approval is, as the distinguished Chairman of the Legal Sub-Committee, Professor Lachs of Poland, has described it, the first chapter in the book of space law. What the Committee has done has been to approve a number of general legal principles. These legal principles are not merely goals; they are not simply expressions of hope. In the opinion of the Canadian Delegation, they reflect international law as it is accepted by member states. We consider it most important and significant that the two major space powers, the Soviet Union and the United States of America, should both have declared their intent, provided the declaration is approved by the General Assembly, to conduct their activities in outer space in conformity with these principles. For its part, the Government of Canada also wished to state its willingness, if the draft declaration is adopted by the General Assembly, to conduct any activities in outer space in which it may be involved in conformity with these principles.