

SPACE LAW

After years of discussion on the use of nuclear power sources (NPS) in outer-space, the Legal Sub-Committee of the U.N. Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has adopted five out of eleven draft principles, two of which were accepted at the 1989 session. The main area of focus remains a proposed principle containing guidelines and criteria for safe use of NPS. Substantial discussion took place this year at the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and Legal Sub-Committee sessions on a revised Canadian version of this principle, resulting in a joint working paper co-sponsored by Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Great Britain, and Sweden. The main elements of an acceptable package appear to be contained in the draft principles now before the Legal Sub-Committee. A strong effort will be made by Canada over the next year or two to bring this exercise to conclusion and have the principles submitted to the U.N. General Assembly for approval.

In other areas, the Legal Sub-Committee proceeded with its first full discussion of the new agenda item "Consideration of the legal aspects related to the application of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all states, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries." It recommended that a working group on the subject be established not later than 1991 to consider, inter alia, national legal frameworks and international agreements relating to the principle that outer space should be utilized for the benefit of all states. During general debate, the Sub-Committee also discussed the risks posed by space debris, with some delegations proposing that this matter should be the next new subject taken up by the Sub-Committee.