

WHISMUN 2026

The Next Frontier



27th & 28th June, 2026.



STUDY GUIDE

SPECPOL

Agenda : Preventing the Weaponization of Outer Space and Building Global Trust in the New Space Race

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Letter From the Chair

Esteemed Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) of WHIS MUN 2026. The agenda before us, "Preventing the Weaponization of Outer Space and Building Global Trust in the New Space Race," addresses one of the most pressing challenges facing the international community in the twenty-first century. As technological advancements accelerate and an increasing number of states and private actors enter the space domain, questions surrounding security, governance, and international cooperation have become central to maintaining peace and stability beyond Earth.

This study guide has been carefully prepared to provide you with a foundational understanding of the agenda and is by no means exhaustive. It serves as a starting point for deeper research into the historical, legal, technical, and geopolitical dimensions of space security. We encourage all delegates to explore the topic extensively, examine their assigned country's position on outer space governance, understand the interests of other key stakeholders, and familiarize themselves with the international legal frameworks that regulate activities in space.

Diplomacy will be your most valuable tool throughout this committee. As delegates, you will be tasked with balancing national security interests, technological innovation, international law, and the collective responsibility to preserve outer space as a peaceful domain for future generations. Represent your country's policies accurately while engaging constructively with fellow delegates to develop practical and consensus-driven solutions.

The challenges posed by the emerging space race cannot be addressed by any single nation alone. Meaningful progress will require cooperation, trust-building, and a shared commitment to preventing conflict in outer space. We look forward to witnessing the innovative ideas, rigorous debate, and collaborative spirit that you will bring to this committee. May this experience challenge your perspectives, deepen your understanding of international affairs, and inspire thoughtful contributions to one of the defining policy discussions of our era.

Wishing you a productive and enriching committee experience.

Regards,
Ishwaree Mahajan

Introduction to the Committee and Committee Mandate

History

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL), commonly known as the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), traces its origins to the founding of the United Nations in 1945. At that time, a significant proportion of the world's population lived under colonial administration, making decolonization one of the UN's foremost concerns. The UN Charter, particularly Chapter XI, emphasized the responsibility of administering powers to promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of peoples in non-self-governing territories and to support their progress toward self-government.

To address these issues, the Fourth Committee was established with a primary focus on decolonization and trusteeship matters. Alongside it, the Special Political Committee (SPC) was later created to examine political questions that did not fall within the mandate of other General Assembly committees. In 1993, through General Assembly Resolution 47/233, the SPC and the Fourth Committee were merged, creating the present-day Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL).

Today, SPECPOL remains one of the six principal committees of the General Assembly. While its historical roots lie in decolonization, its responsibilities have expanded considerably to include a range of political, security, and peacekeeping issues. The committee has played an important role in supporting the global decolonization process, which has seen more than eighty former colonies achieve independence since the establishment of the United Nations.

Mandate

SPECPOL is responsible for examining a broad range of matters related to international political cooperation, decolonization, peacekeeping operations, and questions affecting global security. Following the completion of most trusteeship responsibilities, the committee's mandate evolved to include special political issues that require the attention of the General Assembly.

The committee addresses topics such as the peaceful settlement of disputes, assistance to refugees and displaced populations, mine action, the effects of atomic radiation, information activities, peacekeeping operations, and matters relating to outer space. Through these discussions, SPECPOL seeks to strengthen international cooperation, uphold the principles of the UN Charter, and contribute to global peace and stability.

For the agenda *"Preventing the Weaponization of Outer Space and Building Global Trust in the New Space Race,"* SPECPOL serves as an essential forum for dialogue on the peaceful use of outer space. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) serves as the primary UN body for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. Its recommendations and annual reports are submitted to SPECPOL, which reviews its work and forwards resolutions on outer space cooperation to the General Assembly.

Composition and Working Methods

As a Main Committee of the General Assembly, SPECPOL is composed of all 193 United Nations Member States. In addition, observer entities, including non-member states, intergovernmental organizations, and certain non-governmental organizations; may participate in discussions without voting rights.

The committee's work is overseen by a Bureau consisting of a Chair, three Vice-Chairs, and a Rapporteur, all elected by Member States at the beginning of each session. Administrative and procedural support is provided by the UN Secretariat, which assists with documentation, meeting coordination, and communication among delegations.

Decision-Making Process

Like other General Assembly committees, SPECPOL adopts recommendations and draft resolutions through voting by Member States. Most procedural matters are decided by a simple majority, while particularly significant questions may require a two-thirds majority. Resolutions adopted by SPECPOL are subsequently forwarded to the General Assembly plenary for final consideration and adoption.

Although SPECPOL's decisions are recommendatory in nature, its debates and resolutions often influence international norms, guide UN policy discussions, and shape global responses to emerging political and security challenges.

Introduction to the Agenda

With the advent of space technology and heightened focus on competitive space race, an increasing number of States are looking to use outer space for both, offensive and defensive military purposes. The arrangement of multi-domain satellites, development of [anti-satellite weapons \(ASAT\)](#) and creation of autonomous defence structures by powerful nations like the USA, China, Russia and India. These powerful countries shifted from the peaceful uses to the framework conceived in the 1967 [Outer Space Treaty](#). This evolving militarisation intimidates to rebuild space into a war zone and risk conflict beyond boundaries. The existing international skeleton secured by the Outer Space Treaty, like the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space 3235(XXIX), was created in a time when space capabilities were limited. These treaties restrain the installation of weapons of mass destruction in orbit but are still silent on the usage of cyber-based weapons in space. This vagueness created an inadequacy that states can exploit to justify its military activities as a self-defence or technological advancement. The lack of necessary verification mechanism and the failure to adopt powerful treaties. To safeguard our outer space as a global collective good, there is an urgent need for recommencing diplomatic engagement, stronger transparency measures and development of a comprehensive international legal authority addressing both military and non-military threats. Preserving space as a peaceful and collective land is crucial for global security as well as collective survival of humankind.

Outer Space Weaponization and Militarization

Outer Space Weaponization: Origin

Space weaponization emerged as an idea gaining prominence in the era of the Cold War after the announcement of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Often referred to as "Star Wars," SDI was a missile defense system intended to be developed by the U.S. in space. The SDI system included an array of satellites that had to detect, recognize, track, and then counter the missiles that were launched against states through their interception at various stages of flight.

Thus, in contrast to missile defense systems used before the introduction of SDI, the system was supposed to include space-based systems, sea-based, and land-based interceptors as part of a multi-layered defense system. Advanced sensors installed on satellites would detect missiles being launched and trace their paths. Interceptors and direct energy systems would target the threats during certain flight phases. In case of failure in space-based interception, ground-based systems such as THAAD and other sea-based missile defense systems would serve as backups.

For such a system to work effectively, various interrelated elements were necessary, which included surveillance satellites, tracking/targeting sensors, command-and-control systems, communication networks, and interceptors. The research that was being carried out under SDI investigated different technologies from orbiting sensors to space-based lasers and interceptors forming the basis of many modern debates about the military applications of space.

Militarization versus Weaponization of Space

While the two terms can be used interchangeably, there is a difference between them.

The Militarization of outer space is the use of space assets for carrying out military operations on Earth. It includes satellites used for communication, intelligence, reconnaissance, navigation, missile early warning, surveillance, command-and-control, and battlefield management purposes. Various systems like GPS, remote sensing satellites, and national technical means of verification have become an important part of modern military operations.

Contrary to this, space weaponization involves the deployment or use of any technology that can be harmful to the target whether the target is in space or in earth. Such technologies include orbital weapons, anti-satellite systems, directed energy weapons, kinetic interceptors and other forms of such technologies. The technologies that are based from earth and can target satellites in outer space are also classified as space weaponization technologies despite their being outside the orbit.

Technologies that are currently available are mainly dual-purpose technologies making it difficult to differentiate between them. For example, interceptors which are made to target ballistic missiles can also target satellites in outer space. This creates the issue of differentiating between the technologies used for peaceful security purposes and military ones.

Weaponization can therefore be viewed as a subset of militarization. While militarization involves the use of space to enhance military effectiveness, weaponization occurs when space systems themselves become instruments of force.

Classification of Space Weaponization

Space Control and Counterspace Activities

Another relevant aspect of space weaponization is space control which is alternatively termed space dominance. The term refers to efforts aimed at ensuring protection of one's space assets and preventing an opponent from gaining access to space.

Counterspace activities include:

- Defending satellites from any kind of interference;
- Preventing opponents from launching space assets;
- Impeding communications and navigation;
- Destroying or damaging hostile satellites; and
- Electronic warfare and cyber operations against space facilities.

This list includes both defensive and offensive measures. Similarly to sea control and air superiority, space control involves the freedom of maneuver for one's own forces and limiting that of an opponent.

Anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles form one of the most dangerous kinds of counterspace systems. ASATs may be deployed from the Earth's surface, from air, from water or even from space itself. They are meant to destroy, damage or disable satellites. ASAT testing has emerged as a serious problem since it results in the generation of huge amount of space debris.

Space Force Applications

The second type is space-based weapons targeting terrestrial objects. This term can also be called the space force application and implies weapons placed in orbit to be capable of attacking Earth-based objects with very little warning time.

The supporters claim that space-based weapons will provide fast strikes at a global level and eliminate the need for deploying weapons in other ways. Opponents, on the other hand, believe that weapons placed in orbit will cause destabilization of the international security environment due to the short decision time frame and potential development of the arms race in outer space.

At present, there are no states that possess orbital-to-Earth weapons; still, the future development of such weaponry raises important questions regarding preventing space weaponization.

Existing Legal Framework

1. Outer Space Treaty (1967)

The Outer Space Treaty, formally known 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, is the foundation of modern international space law. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and entering into force in 1967, it established the basic legal principles governing activities in outer space and remains the cornerstone of global space governance.

Key Provisions

- Outer space must be explored and used for the benefit of all countries, regardless of their level of economic or scientific development.
- All states have the freedom to explore and use outer space without discrimination.
- No state may claim sovereignty over outer space, the Moon, or other celestial bodies through occupation, use, or any other means.
- The placement of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in orbit, on celestial bodies, or elsewhere in outer space is prohibited.
- The Moon and other celestial bodies may only be used for peaceful purposes.
- Astronauts are regarded as "envoys of mankind" and should be assisted in cases of distress.
- States bear international responsibility for all national space activities, including those conducted by private companies and non-governmental entities.
- Launching states are internationally liable for damage caused by their space objects.
- States must avoid harmful contamination of outer space and celestial bodies.

Relevance to the Agenda

While the Outer Space Treaty prohibits the deployment of weapons of mass destruction in space, it does not explicitly ban conventional weapons, anti-satellite (ASAT) systems, or many emerging military space technologies. This legal gap lies at the heart of contemporary debates on preventing the weaponization of outer space and has prompted calls for new international agreements, confidence-building measures, and norms of responsible behavior in space.

2. Liability Convention (1972)

The Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects, commonly known as the Liability Convention, was adopted in 1972 to establish clear rules regarding responsibility for damage caused by space activities. Building upon Article VII of the Outer

Space Treaty, the Convention seeks to ensure that states remain accountable for their actions in outer space and provide compensation when their space objects cause harm.

Key Provisions

- A launching state is internationally liable for damage caused by its space objects. A launching state includes any state that launches, procures the launch of, or allows a launch from its territory or facilities.
- States bear absolute liability for damage caused by their space objects on the surface of the Earth or to aircraft in flight, meaning compensation must be paid regardless of fault.
- For damage occurring in outer space, liability is based on fault, requiring proof that a state's actions or negligence caused the damage.
- Claims for compensation must be brought by states through diplomatic channels rather than directly by private individuals or companies.
- When multiple states are involved in a launch, they may be held jointly and severally liable for any resulting damage.

Relevance to the Agenda

As space becomes increasingly congested and militarized, the Liability Convention has gained renewed importance. Anti-satellite (ASAT) tests, satellite collisions, and other military activities in space can generate large amounts of orbital debris, threatening spacecraft operated by multiple countries. The Convention provides a framework for determining responsibility when such activities result in damage.

However, the treaty was drafted during an era when commercial space activity and advanced counterspace technologies were far less developed. It does not clearly address many contemporary challenges, including cyberattacks on satellites, electronic interference, autonomous space systems, or responsibility for debris created by military actions. Consequently, delegates may consider whether existing liability mechanisms are sufficient to address the risks posed by the growing weaponization of outer space and the emergence of a new space race.

3. Moon Agreement (1979)

The Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, commonly known as the Moon Agreement, was adopted in 1979 to expand upon the principles established by the Outer Space Treaty. It seeks to create a legal framework for activities on the Moon and other celestial bodies, particularly concerning resource extraction, environmental

protection, and international cooperation. The Agreement declares the Moon and its natural resources to be the "common heritage of mankind" and emphasizes that their use should benefit all countries rather than a select group of technologically advanced states.

Key Provisions

- No state may claim sovereignty, ownership, or territorial rights over the Moon or any part of it.
- The Moon and other celestial bodies must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, prohibiting military bases, weapons testing, and military operations.
- Lunar resources are considered the common heritage of mankind, and their exploitation should be conducted in a manner that benefits all states.
- The Agreement calls for the future establishment of an international regime to govern the extraction and utilization of lunar resources.
- States must take measures to prevent harmful contamination of the lunar environment and avoid activities that could adversely affect scientific research.
- Governments are responsible for authorizing and supervising the activities of both governmental and non-governmental entities operating on the Moon.
- States are encouraged to cooperate in scientific exploration and share relevant information and research findings.
- States bear international responsibility for national activities conducted on the Moon and other celestial bodies.

Relevance to the Agenda

Although the Moon Agreement is not primarily a disarmament treaty, it contains important provisions relating to the peaceful use of celestial bodies. Its prohibition of military activities on the Moon reflects broader international efforts to prevent the extension of armed conflict into outer space. Furthermore, the treaty highlights the growing challenge of balancing national interests, commercial ambitions, and collective global benefits in an era of renewed lunar exploration.

As competition among states and private actors intensifies in the new space race, the Moon Agreement raises important questions regarding resource governance, international cooperation, and the extent to which existing legal frameworks can prevent strategic rivalry from spilling over into the exploration and use of celestial bodies.

4. Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS)

The Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) is a long-standing United Nations initiative aimed at ensuring that outer space remains a peaceful domain and does not become an arena for military competition. First introduced during the Cold War, PAROS has been discussed annually within the United Nations General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament. Unlike the Outer Space Treaty, PAROS is not a legally binding treaty but rather an ongoing diplomatic process and a series of UN resolutions intended to strengthen international efforts against the weaponization of outer space.

Key Objectives

- Prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space and the emergence of an arms race beyond Earth.
- Reinforce and expand upon the principles established by the Outer Space Treaty.
- Encourage states to use outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes.
- Promote international cooperation, transparency, and confidence-building measures in space activities.
- Address legal gaps left by existing treaties, particularly regarding conventional weapons and anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities.
- Encourage negotiations on legally binding measures to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

Limitations and Challenges

Despite broad international support, PAROS has not resulted in a binding international agreement. Progress has been hindered by disagreements among major powers regarding:

- The definition of a "space weapon";
- The inclusion of ground-based ASAT systems;
- Verification and compliance mechanisms;
- The military implications of dual-use technologies; and
- Whether new legally binding treaties or voluntary norms of responsible behavior are the most effective approach.

As a result, discussions within the Conference on Disarmament have often faced political deadlock, limiting progress toward a comprehensive agreement.

Open-Ended Working Group (2025–2028)

Recognizing the growing strategic importance of outer space, the United Nations General Assembly established an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space for the period 2025–2028. The Working Group is tasked with examining existing and emerging threats to space security, identifying practical transparency and confidence-building measures, and exploring recommendations for future legal and political frameworks.

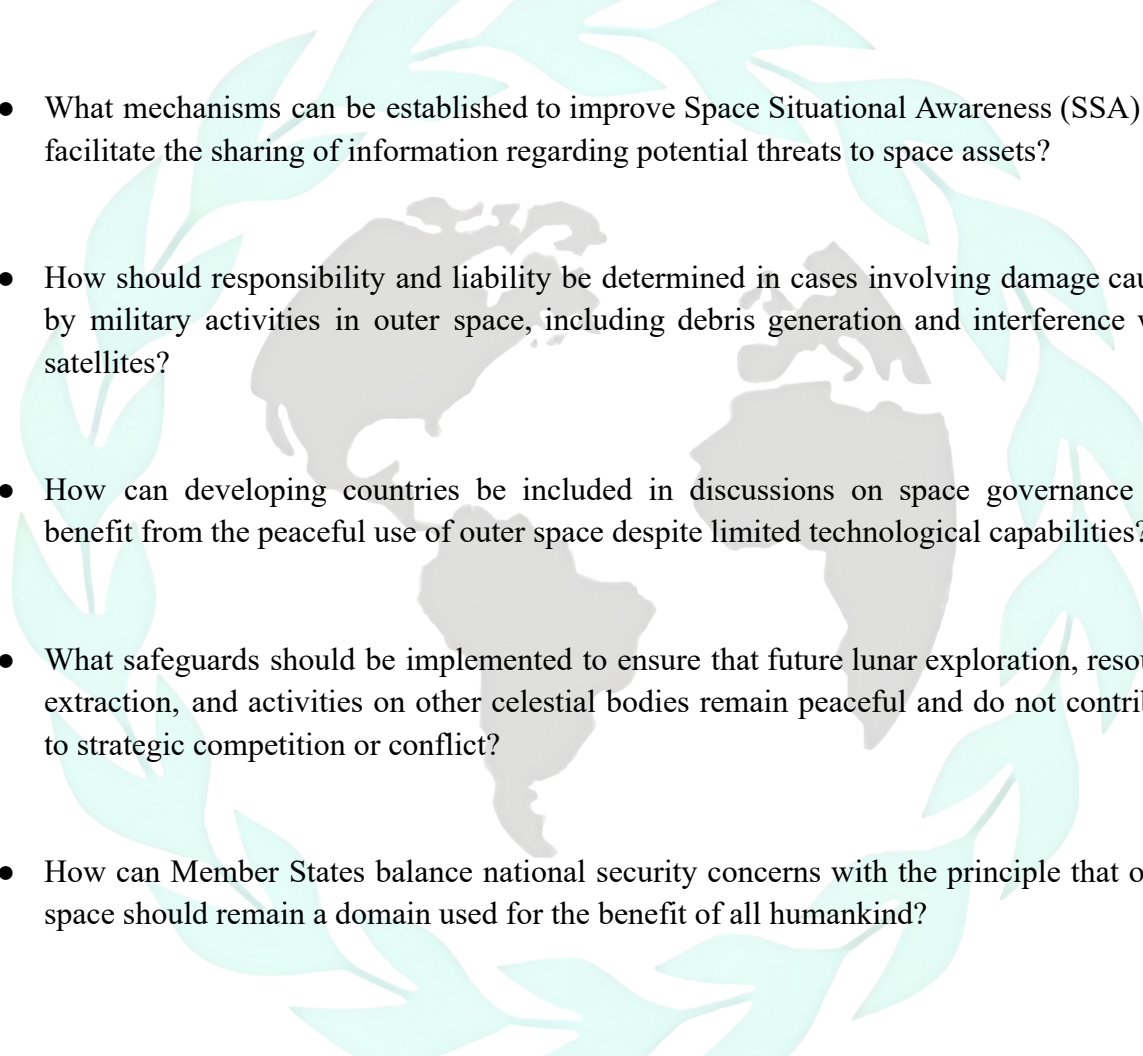
The OEWG serves as a forum where all UN Member States can participate in discussions on responsible behavior in outer space, confidence-building measures, risk reduction, and the prevention of conflict in space. Its findings are expected to shape future international negotiations and potentially lay the groundwork for new agreements on space security.

Relevance to the Agenda

PAROS lies at the center of contemporary efforts to prevent the weaponization of outer space. While the Outer Space Treaty prohibits the placement of weapons of mass destruction in space, it does not explicitly ban conventional space weapons or anti-satellite systems. PAROS seeks to address these shortcomings by promoting dialogue, confidence-building measures, and potential legal frameworks aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. Consequently, many of the debates surrounding the agenda "Preventing the Weaponization of Outer Space and Building Global Trust in the New Space Race" are rooted directly in the objectives and ongoing discussions of PAROS.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

- How should the international community define the term "weaponization of outer space"? Should the definition include only space-based weapons, or also ground-based systems capable of targeting space assets?
- Are the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty sufficient to address contemporary space security challenges? If not, what legal gaps require further international regulation?
- Should the international community pursue a new legally binding treaty on space security, strengthen existing agreements, or focus on voluntary norms and confidence-building measures?
- What role should the United Nations, COPUOS, the Conference on Disarmament, and other international bodies play in preventing the weaponization of outer space?
- Should Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapons be prohibited, regulated, or subjected to transparency and reporting requirements? How can compliance be monitored and verified?
- How can states address the challenge of dual-use technologies that have both civilian and military applications in outer space?
- What measures can be implemented to reduce the creation of space debris resulting from military activities, ASAT tests, and satellite collisions?
- How can Member States improve transparency regarding military space activities while protecting legitimate national security interests?

- What confidence-building measures, such as pre-launch notifications, information-sharing mechanisms, military hotlines, or transparency reports, could help reduce mistrust among spacefaring nations?
 - How should the international community regulate emerging technologies such as co-orbital satellites, directed-energy weapons, autonomous spacecraft, and cyber capabilities targeting space infrastructure?
 - What mechanisms can be established to improve Space Situational Awareness (SSA) and facilitate the sharing of information regarding potential threats to space assets?
 - How should responsibility and liability be determined in cases involving damage caused by military activities in outer space, including debris generation and interference with satellites?
 - How can developing countries be included in discussions on space governance and benefit from the peaceful use of outer space despite limited technological capabilities?
 - What safeguards should be implemented to ensure that future lunar exploration, resource extraction, and activities on other celestial bodies remain peaceful and do not contribute to strategic competition or conflict?
 - How can Member States balance national security concerns with the principle that outer space should remain a domain used for the benefit of all humankind?
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Suggestive Guidelines

- Please use this study guide as a blueprint and foundational document to begin your portfolio specific research. It is by no means exhaustive and must only be used as a launchpad (pun intended).
- The references provided are to indicative of the expected line of research. You may refer to the QARMA section to formulate your solution-oriented material for both, oral as well as written presentation.
- Try to balance your research in two aspects – International law and International Relations. Ignoring either will blindsides the committee discussion.
- Do not get overwhelmed by the amount of literature available on the internet. The committee is going to be straightforward and inclusive. Your creativity, diplomacy and authenticity will take you farther.
- Kindly ensure you are thorough with portfolio-specific research apart from the general resources provided herewith.
- Please save your doubts for the RoP session. In case, they are not addressed by then, you may reach out on – ishwaree715@gmail.com