

Statement by Nat Gopalswamy, President of the Scientific Committee on Solar Terrestrial Physics (SCOSTEP), on agenda item 4 "General exchange of views" in support of SCOSTEP's application for observer's status with the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

February 13, 2012

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates and representatives,

The Scientific Committee on Solar Terrestrial Physics (SCOSTEP) is pleased to make a statement in support of its application for permanent observer status with the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. SCOSTEP is an interdisciplinary body of the International Council for Science (ICSU), charged with the long-term responsibility to promote international, interdisciplinary programs in solar-terrestrial physics.

Understanding how the solar variability affects the human society has become highly relevant due to the society's increased dependence on ground- and space-based technology. Sun creates hazardous conditions in outer space, which can affect all kinds of satellites and the interplanetary spacecraft. SCOSTEP promotes research on this topic by providing the necessary scientific framework for international collaboration and dissemination of the derived scientific knowledge.

SCOSTEP has organized and conducted international solar-terrestrial research programs for over 30 years. The current program is the Climate and Weather of the Sun-Earth System (CAWSES), established in 2004 and will conclude in 2013. The main functions of CAWSES are coordinating international activities in observations, modeling and applications crucial to achieving a better understanding of Earth's space environment and impacts on life and society. Efforts are under way to establish the next scientific program.

SCOSTEP is governed by a Bureau, whose members come from international scientific unions such as COSPAR, IAGA, IAMAS, IAU, IUPAP, SCAR, and URSI. All these organizations have significant interest in solar-terrestrial relationship and space weather. The general council of SCOSTEP consists of representatives from 36 member countries and 55 expert scientific discipline representatives from all over the world. In addition to running the scientific programs, SCOSTEP is heavily invested in Capacity Building in developing countries and public outreach.

SCOSTEP conducts quadrennial Solar Terrestrial Physics symposia, which are the prime venue for reporting results from the ongoing SCOSTEP scientific program. The most recent symposium was held in Berlin, Germany in 2010 attended by more than 200 scientists from all over the world. The next symposium will be held in Xi'An, China in 2014. Specialized symposia are also organized with a regional focus. Two such symposia will be held in India in 2012 and in Japan in 2013.

SCOSTEP has been a cosponsor of the Space Science Schools conducted by the International Heliophysical Year program, which continues now as the International Space Weather Initiative. Support was provided to the schools in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Slovakia in recent years. SCOSTEP recognizes the space science schools as an important capacity building activity and will continue to support future schools planned in Indonesia, South Africa, and South America.

SCOSTEP has been sponsoring a series of 'Comic Books' designed to raise the awareness of the general public - young people in particular - about issues in solar-terrestrial science. "What is the Sun-Climate Relationship?" is one of the comic books that explains the role played by the Sun in the changing climate of Earth. Originally produced in Japanese, these books have been translated into English, Italian, Spanish, Hindi and Korean. Translations are under way into Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Finnish, French, Hebrew, Marathi, Tamil, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Pidgin, Russian, Swedish and Thai. Cartoon blanks are available at the SCOSTEP web site that can be used in translating the books into other languages.

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, COPUOS reviews the scope of international cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space, devises programs in this field and encourages continued research and the dissemination of information. Mr. Chairman, SCOSTEP has high relevance and synergy to all these activities as applied to Sun-Earth connections. Therefore, it is highly beneficial to have a stronger relationship between COPUOS and SCOSTEP.

There is a heavy overlap between the national memberships of SCOSTEP and COPUOS. A permanent observer status for SCOSTEP with COPUOS will enhance the global cooperation in understanding the space weather hazard and hence beneficial to the member states.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.