

ASE Committee on Near-Earth Objects

27 Feb 13

Summary of Activity at United Nations, Vienna, Austria.

- Tom Jones (ASE, Chair of ASE Committee on NEOs) attended United Nations discussions of international planning for the threat of an asteroid impact. Meetings held in Vienna, Austria, Feb. 14-21.
- Action Team 14 (AT-14) met on Feb. 14-15. AT-14 is an expert action group made up of member state delegates and observers.
- AT-14 reports its work to the Working Group on NEOs of the Science and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).
- Our AT-14 work further developed an agreement for the COPUOS' consideration, setting out the necessary international functions needed to confront the asteroid impact hazard.
- Our two days of discussions put the AT-14 report into shape for consideration by the NEO Working Group, and then the Science and Technical Subcommittee (STSC).
- The AT-14 also reviewed technical presentations by member states' space agencies: NASA, ESA, JAXA, Russia, etc.
- Other observers and agencies represented included China, the Secure World Foundation, the European Southern Observatory, the International Astronomical Union, the Space Generation Advisory Council, ASE, etc.
- On Friday, April 15, amid reports of the Russia Chelyabinsk bolide explosion and the anticipated arrival of 2012 DA14 on its close Earth flyby, the Science and Technical Subcommittee convened to hear technical reports and statements on the asteroid impact hazard.
- ASE arranged for Canadian astronaut to address the STSC delegates by video from the International Space Station. Hadfield's video is posted on the ASE website. Hadfield urged rapid and concrete progress on dealing internationally with the real threat of an asteroid impact.
- ASE member and ASE NEO Chair Tom Jones addressed the delegates with a statement urging adoption of the AT-14 recommendations by the STSC, COPUOS, and General Assembly. The statement is posted at the ASE website.
- ASE's Tom Jones attended that night an amateur astronomy gathering in Vienna [<http://www.waa.at/bericht/2013/02/20130215pan.de.html>] observing the DA14 flyby, and spoke about the work of AT-14; several of AT-14's members also addressed the group.
- On Monday, Feb. 18, the STSC convened again and heard further NEO technical presentations. Anticipated is a recommendation from the NEO Working Group (member state delegates only) that the AT-14 work should be endorsed.
- Word from AT-14 chair Sergio Camacho is that all AT-14 recommendations (developed through discussions in Vienna) will be adopted by the Working Group (with language modifications from delegations, pending).
- Given the work methods of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the recommendations of the Working Group will likely be adopted by the Committee in June. The General Assembly will likely follow suit in October without further discussions.

- Link to the AT-14 report with the recommendations:
http://www.unoosa.org/pdf/limited/c1/AC105_C1_L329E.pdf
- In early March, the report adopted by the Working Group will be available to Sergio, and he will distribute it to AT-14.
- It may take some time for the UN in Vienna to post the report online, as it needs to be posted in the six official languages at the same time; this will depend on the workload of the Documents Control Section.
- Recommendations:
 - The UN report L329E referenced above recommends implementing the three main functions that ASE NEO advised in 2008:
 - (a) Discovering hazardous asteroids and comets and identifying those objects that pose a true threat requiring action;
 - (b) Planning a mitigation campaign that involves deflection or disruption actions as well as civil defence activities;
 - (c) Implementation of a mitigation campaign, if the threat warrants.
 - Section III of L329E recommends that the member states:
 - Establish International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN)
 - Links space agency NEO search, tracking, and warning experts
 - Establish Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG)
 - Member states with space agencies to collaborate and fund
 - Establish Impact Disaster Planning Advisory Group (IDPAG)
 - Using existing UN disaster response pathways, and UN-SPIDER experience with terrestrial disasters
 - Upon detection of actual asteroid threat, the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space will take steps to decide on implementing a deflection campaign
 - Can use existing UN organs to communicate threat information
 - Can commission a consortium of willing member states to prepare a deflection campaign plan
 - Can call on Security Council for fast response to an imminent threat.
- Action Team 14 will continue to advise the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and its Science and Technical Subcommittee, on the necessary steps for preparing for the asteroid and comet hazard.
- As an observer at the Action Team and the Science and Technical Subcommittee and at COPUOS, ASE is invited to participate in future discussions of the implementation of the functions above.

Tom Jones, PhD
 Chairman, ASE Committee on Near-Earth Objects
tj@space-explorers.org
skywalking@cox.net