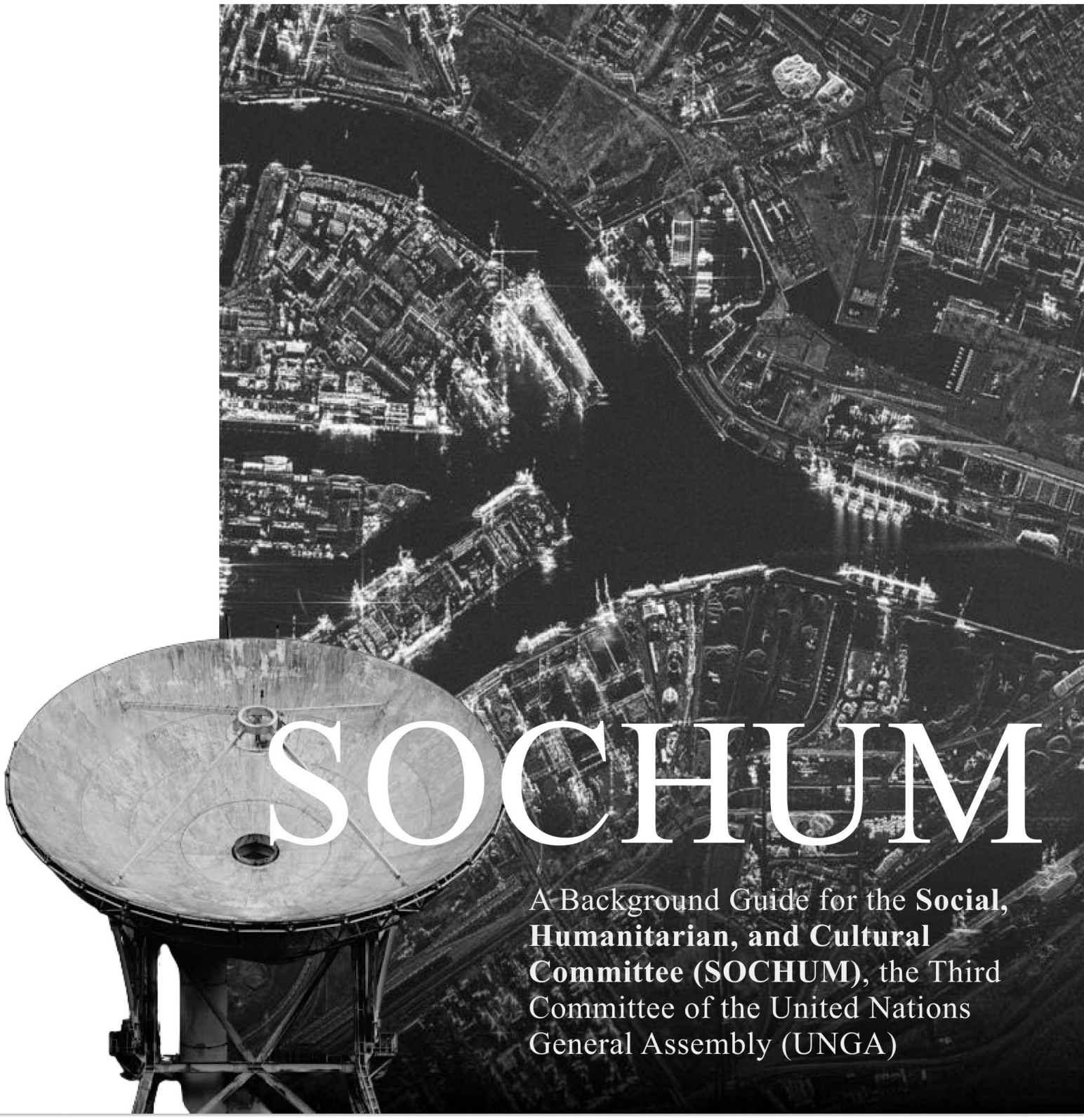
AKAMUN OFFICIAL BACKGROUND GUIDE

The regulation of military and dual-use surveillance from orbit. Where does national security end, where do privacy and the peaceful use of outer space begin, and who writes the rules?



SOCHUM

A Background Guide for the **Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)**, the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

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Akademiet Model United Nations 2026

A Letter from the Secretary-General

Dear Delegates and Faculty Advisors,

It is my absolute honour to invite you to the first iteration of Akademiet Model United Nations (AMUN) set to take place in Sandvika 10–11 October 2026.

My name is Shubhi Maheshwari, and I am a second-year high school student at Akademiet Realfagsgymnas Sandvika. I was first introduced to Model United Nations during my first year of the IBDP, and ever since then, I have developed a strong passion for MUN and the personal growth it provides.

There are very few MUN communities in Norway, and most of them are based in IB schools. After my amazing experience with MUN, I hoped that more students would have the chance to experience the same exposure, personal growth, and international perspective that MUN offers.

When starting at Akademiet, I took initiative to establish an MUN club only a week after joining the school. At the time, Model United Nations was a completely unfamiliar concept to most students. Many were unsure about debating in a language that they seldom used in their everyday life, and hesitant to participate. Nevertheless, we worked together to build a welcoming and supportive environment.

Since then, we have established a wonderful and dedicated group. In just one year, we have attended conferences in Stavanger, Oslo, Dubai, and the Netherlands. These experiences have strengthened our passion for MUN and expanded our understanding of international diplomacy and debate.

Now, we hope to host our own conference and create a space where everyone can participate and grow. Being a club which has gone from not knowing anything about the concept to participating in conferences worldwide, we know the essentials for a good MUN experience. Drawing on our experiences from some of the largest and most prestigious conferences, we aim to design an event that offers a unique and memorable experience. Through this conference, we hope to share our enthusiasm for MUN and inspire more students to become part of this incredible community.

Very excited to see everyone soon!
Shubhi Maheshwari
Secretary-General

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Section I: Introduction

The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly[1]. It focuses on issues related to human rights[2], humanitarian affairs, and social development, including privacy[3] and the impact of emerging technologies in society.

Section II: Topic Overview

Surveillance satellites are satellites in space used to observe activities on Earth. They can gather information such as collecting images, track movement, and monitor environmental changes. Governments use these satellites for national security, border monitoring, disaster response, and intelligence gathering. Private companies also operate satellites that can collect and sell **Earth observation** data.

Satellite technology has become increasingly sophisticated over time and can provide significant benefits through the capture of high-resolution images, monitoring of large areas continuously, and detecting changes over time. Benefits such as disaster management, climate monitoring, and humanitarian assistance.

However, it stands to reason that concerns about **Privacy**, state surveillance, misuse of data and the balance between national security and human rights have been growing. As technology advances and the use of satellites increases, the international community faces questions regarding how satellite surveillance should be regulated while still having the benefits.

Section III: Context

The UN first recognized this issue after the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, launched in 1957 and shortly after, they established the **United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)**[4]. Later the UN successfully negotiated the **Outer Space Treaty** (1967)[5], the first in a series of international space treaties, that established that outer space should be used for peaceful purposes and the benefit of all humanity[6]. This was during the cold war, when the first surveillance satellites were developed by the United States. The United States and the Soviet Union used **Reconnaissance satellites** to monitor each other's military activities and nuclear programs[7]. With the help of satellite surveillance, uncertainty between rival powers reduced and made **Arms-control verification** feasible.

In 1986 the UN adopted principles relating to **Remote sensing** of Earth from space, which encourage respect for state **Sovereignty** while recognizing the advantage of satellite data for development and environmental protection.

Since the 1990s, advances in technology have increased satellite capabilities. In recent years, private companies such as Vantor and Planet labs have made satellite imagery widely available for governments, journalists, researchers and humanitarian organizations.

Recent conflicts, including the war in Ukraine, has demonstrated how the commercial satellite imagery can influence military operations, public opinion, and international responses. At the same time, governments rely increasingly on these technologies for border control, migration monitoring and law enforcement. As satellite capabilities improve through **Artificial intelligence** and large **Satellite constellations**, concerns regarding privacy and accountability continue to grow.

Section IV: Key Terms

Surveillance satellites: Earth-orbiting spacecrafts designed for monitoring specific regions, activities or environmental conditions and changes from space.

Earth observation (EO): "The process of gathering information about the Earth's surface, waters and atmosphere via ground-based, airborne and/or satellite remote sensing platforms" (EUSPA, 2026)[8]

Privacy: The right or ability of an individual to be free from secret surveillance, or unauthorized disclosure of personal information.

Reconnaissance satellites: "Also known as spy satellites, are spacecrafts used by governments to monitor foreign military operations and other phenomena involving national security" (Tabor, 2026).[9]

Arms-control verification: The process used by countries to check if other nations are following the rules of a disarmament or non-proliferation action.

United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS): "was set up by the General Assembly in 1959 to govern the exploration and use of space for the benefit of all humanity; for peace, security and development." (United Nations, n.d.).[10]

Outer space treaty: a treaty made so no state can own or use outer space in such a way that it only benefits that state, and that use of outer space should benefit all of humanity.

Remote sensing: means reading data from a remote senser system such as a camera or radiation sensors.

Sovereignty: in political theory means ultimate power or authority, often used to describe an independent authority over a territory, government or population.

Commercial satellite operator: a non-governmental company that owns and operates satellites for commercial use such as weather reporting, satellite imagery or communication.

Artificial intelligence (AI): a type of technology that uses pattern recognition and reasoning in a human like manner to come to a conclusion or provide information.

Large satellite constellations: Large satellite constellations, also called mega-constellations are hundreds to tens of thousands of artificial satellites working together as a single system.

Section V: Key Questions

• Is the current international framework sufficient enough to regulate modern satellite use?

• How can the international community balance the use of satellites for national security interests with the right to privacy?

• Should new international regulations govern the use of surveillance satellites?

• Should commercial companies be allowed to sell high-resolution satellite imagery?

• How can developing countries gain access to satellite data for environmental and humanitarian purposes?

• How can satellite technologies be used to support human rights and humanitarian assistance?

Section VI: Rules of Procedure

The Rules at AKAMUN

This section provides a brief overview of the rules and procedures used at AKAMUN. It does not cover every rule or situation that may arise during the conference, but the Chairs will explain additional procedures when necessary. The Chairs are there to help you understand how the rules work and will guide you throughout the conference. You do not need to memorize every rule or understand everything before the conference begins. Think of MUN as a board game: you learn the rules as you play. We understand that the rules may seem overwhelming at first, but they become much easier once you get the hang of them.

Roll Call

At the beginning of each session, the Chair will conduct a roll call. Delegates should answer either “present” or “present and voting.” Delegates who answer “present and voting” waive their right to abstain during substantive voting. See Voting Procedure below.

Formal Debate and the Speakers’ List
Formal debate begins when the Chair opens the Speakers’ List. The Speakers’ List is a list of delegates who wish to speak on the topic under discussion. Delegates should raise their placards when the Chair asks for speakers to be added to the list. Each speech will have a time limit, usually between 60 and 90 seconds. When a delegate’s speaking time expires, the floor will pass to the next speaker. When a delegate finishes their speech, they may yield the floor to the following:

• Another delegate, who may hold a speech

• Questions, allowing other delegates to ask Points of Information (questions), if permitted by the Chair.

• The Chair, in which case the delegate has concluded their speech and may take their seat.

Delegates are expected to remain in the committee room and in their seats during formal debate. Delegates must request the Chair’s permission before leaving their seat or the room. This may be done through a Point of Personal Privilege.

Points
Points allow delegates to address the Chair directly regarding procedural matters, personal needs, or questions concerning a speech. Points do not require a vote. A delegate may raise the following:

• Point of Order. Used when a delegate believes that the rules of procedure have not been followed correctly. A Point of Order may interrupt a speaker only when the matter is sufficiently serious to require immediate clarification. The Chair’s ruling on the matter is final.

• Point of Personal Privilege. Used when a delegate is experiencing a personal difficulty that affects their ability to participate in debate. This may include being unable to hear or see, excessive noise, room temperature, or another physical or practical concern. A Point of Personal Privilege may interrupt a speaker when necessary. It may also be used to request permission to leave the delegate’s seat or the committee room, including for bathroom visits.

• Point of Parliamentary Inquiry. Used to ask the Chair a question regarding parliamentary procedure. Delegates may use this point to ask what motion is currently on the floor, how much speaking time remains, what a particular motion means, or what procedure will follow. A Point of Parliamentary Inquiry may not interrupt a speaker.

• Point of Information. Used to ask a question regarding the content of a delegate’s speech. A Point of Information may only be raised when the speaker has yielded their remaining time to questions and the Chair has recognized the delegate. Questions should be relevant to the speech and should be phrased as questions rather than statements or arguments. The speaker may choose whether to answer the question.

Motions
Motions are simply proposals for what the committee should do next. Motions change the way the committee is proceeding and therefore require a vote. When the Chair asks if there are any motions on the floor, delegates may raise their placards to

propose a motion. The Chair must recognize the delegate before they may state their motion, after which the Chair will determine whether the motion is in order. Delegates may call out “seconded” to indicate that they support the motion and wish for it to be considered. In simple terms, a motion is a suggestion for what the committee should do next. For example, a motion may suggest discussing a specific topic, giving speeches on a particular issue, entering an unmoderated caucus (see Caucuses below), or taking a break.

Caucusing and Lobbying
An unmoderated caucus pauses formal debate. During this time, delegates may move around the room and speak directly with one another. Delegates are not required to follow the usual rules of formal debate. However, delegates are not allowed to leave the committee without permission. Delegates are expected to use an unmoderated caucus to negotiate with other delegates, form blocs, and develop ideas for possible solutions. This is also when most working papers (see Working Papers versus Resolution Papers below) are written. Unmoderated caucuses are also the main opportunity for lobbying. Lobbying means building support for your ideas. For example, delegates may look for “allies” or combine similar proposals with other delegates.

Draft resolutions and Resolutions
A draft resolution is a document where delegates write down and organize their proposed solutions to the topic being discussed. Draft resolutions are developed through debate and caucusing, usually by groups of delegates working together. They follow a specific format and are divided into preambulatory clauses, which explain the issue and provide context, and operative clauses, which outline the actions the committee proposes to take. Once a draft resolution has been submitted and approved by the Chair, it can be discussed in committee, amended, and eventually put to a vote.

A resolution paper is the final version of a draft resolution after all amendments have been considered and the committee has voted on it. If it receives the required majority of votes, it is adopted as a resolution of the committee.

Voting Procedure
When the committee has finished debating a draft resolution, a delegate may make a motion to enter voting procedure. If the Chair rules the motion in order, the committee will enter voting procedure. Once voting procedure begins, the room will be closed by an administrator, and delegates are not permitted to leave the committee room. Delegates may still raise a Point of Order if they believe that the rules of procedure are not being followed. See Points above. Most procedural votes require a simple majority. The adoption of a draft resolution generally requires a two-thirds majority. Delegates may vote in favour, against, or abstain. However, delegates who answered “present and voting” during roll call may not abstain.

Respect, courtesy and Formality
Delegates are expected to always conduct themselves with respect and courtesy. During formal debates, delegates must refer to themselves and other delegates in third person. For example, instead of saying “I believe this is a good solution,” a delegate should say, “This delegate believes this is a good solution.” Additionally, instead of saying “I do not support this proposal,” a delegate may also say, “The delegation/delegate of [country] does not support this proposal,” replacing [country] with the country that you represent. Delegates should refer to other delegates as “the delegate,” “the delegate of [country],” or another appropriate reference to the country they represent. The pronoun “you” should also be avoided when addressing an individual delegate, although it may be used when addressing delegates collectively.

Personal comments, phone use during formal debate, and other disruptive behaviour may be addressed or penalized at the Chair’s discretion. Delegates are allowed to use laptops during committee sessions, but only for purposes directly related to the debate. This includes writing notes, preparing speeches, developing ideas, preparing questions and arguments, or conducting other work relevant to the committee’s proceedings. Delegates are allowed to use generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT or Claude, in accordance with the Chair’s instructions. This may include assistance with understanding unfamiliar words or concepts, clarifying information, translating phrases, or improving the wording of a delegate’s own ideas. Delegates may also ask the Chairs for assistance when needed. Generative AI should not be used to generate complete speeches, arguments, or other substantive content on behalf of a delegate. Delegates are expected to develop, defend, and present their own ideas during committee sessions and argue for them.

ENDNOTES

Images used throughout this background guide
Cover image (radar satellite view): [creator, year, title, source and URL to be added]
Cover image (radar dish): [creator, year, title, source and URL to be added]

Further reading: space agencies
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): https://www.nasa.gov/
Planet labs: https://www.planet.com/
The European Space Agency (ESA): https://www.esa.int/
Vantor: https://vantor.com/

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[1] *Sources cited throughout this background guide*

United Nations General Assembly. (n.d.). Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee). United Nations: https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml

[2] United Nations General Assembly. (December 10, 1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

[3] United Nations Human Rights: https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage

[4] Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS): https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/index.html

[5] United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. (n.d.). Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. United Nations: https://www.unoosa.org/unoosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/introouterspacetreaty.html

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[9] Tabor, N. (September 26, 2026). Space exploration. Britannica: https://www.britannica.com/technology/spy-satellite

[10] Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS): https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/index.html