Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence (METI): Should Humanity Transmit?

United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)

Author: Ali Khuraibet

Note:Delegates this topic is to have fun with I want you all to be creative with it you can use science fiction if you want if your able to make it sound realistic enough and me and my fellow chair agree, and i would also like to request you to be chaotic with it you have free will you can make anything happen that's theoretically possible we are in mun we want to argue and have fun with the arguments and the topic, so please have fun and enjoy.

Introduction

Humans have wondered whether we're alone for a long time, and for the last fifty years or so we've also done something about it, and instead of only listening, we've aimed transmitters at nearby stars and sent them messages, Math, music, photographs, a few greetings, most of it came from scientists, a few companies, and in one case a music festival,

The practice is called Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence, or METI Nothing forbids it No treaty says who is allowed to speak for humanity, no agency signs off on what gets sent, and no law covers what happens if someone writes back,

Part of the problem is when the rules were written, The treaties that make up outer space law date from the 1960s and 70s, when a private group with a big radio dish would have sounded like science fiction, A message to another star could matter to everyone alive, and to everyone born after us, yet right now anybody with enough power and an antenna can send one,

Your job in this committee is to decide who gets to send messages, who decides what they say, and who is responsible if the people on the other end aren't friendly, There isn't a correct answer waiting at the back of this background paper, Good resolutions will have to protect people without shutting down legitimate science.

History and Background

I. Origin

People talked about contacting other worlds long before anyone had the technology, The modern effort began in 1959, when two physicists at Cornell, Giuseppe Cocconi and Philip Morrison, published a short paper arguing that radio waves were the most practical way to signal between stars, Their paper is usually credited with starting the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI), For a long time afterward, though, scientists mostly listened, Sending was a separate and much more controversial idea.

II. The First Messages

The first deliberate high power message went out in 1974, It was a binary signal lasting about three minutes, sent from the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico toward the star cluster M13, roughly 25,000 light years away, It was mainly a ceremonial gesture, a way of showing off a newly upgraded transmitter, M13 moves, so the message isn't expected to land exactly where it was aimed,

More followed in the late 1990s and 2000s, Cosmic Call (1999 and 2003) used the RT 70 radio telescope at Yevpatoria in Ukraine to send images, math, and text to several nearby sun like stars, The Teen Age Message (2001) was put together with the help of Russian teenagers and aimed at a handful of nearby stars, In 2008, A Message from Earth was sent toward the Gliese 581 system after a public social media campaign.

III. The Modern Debate

The argument got louder in 2010, when Stephen Hawking warned that contacting a more advanced civilisation could go badly for us, in the way that European arrival went badly for the peoples of the Americas, Others replied that we've been leaking radio and television signals for about a century, so a deliberate message hardly changes things, The counterargument was that a focused, powerful beam isn't the same as faint background noise,

In 2015 the Breakthrough Initiatives put money into large scale listening and also launched Breakthrough Message, a project on how a message to another civilisation might be composed, It deliberately stopped short of sending anything until there had been a broader global discussion, Two years later, Sónar Calling GJ 273b sent music and a scientific tutorial from a radar in Norway toward a nearby star known to have a planet,

Detection and transmission are both getting easier, China's FAST telescope is already running, and the Square Kilometre Array is being built in Australia and South Africa, More groups than ever can afford to send a message, which is part of why this committee exists.

How does this affect UNOOSA?

UNOOSA is the secretariat for the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and works to promote international cooperation in space, METI touches the things it cares about most, the legal framework for space, who is responsible for what, and whether space activity benefits all countries and not only the ones with big telescopes, This section covers the legal gaps, the scientific risk, and the question of who speaks for Earth.

I. The Legal Framework

No treaty directly is about METI but here are treaties that effect it one way or another,

- **Outer Space Treaty (1967):** Article I says space activity should be carried out for the benefit of all countries. Article VI makes states responsible for what their citizens and companies do in space and requires them to authorise and supervise it. Article IX says states should avoid harmful contamination of space and harmful changes to Earth's environment. People disagree on whether a hostile reply, or interference from one, would count as an "adverse change."

- **Liability Convention (1972):** A launching state is liable for damage caused by its space object. A radio signal isn't a space object, and the convention defines damage in physical terms, so it's a poor fit.

- **Registration Convention (1975):** States have to register objects they launch. Nothing requires them to register transmissions.

- **ITU Radio Regulations:** The International Telecommunication Union allocates radio frequencies so human users don't interfere with each other. It has no say over what an interstellar message contains.

- **IAA SETI protocols:** The International Academy of Astronautics has a declaration on what to do after a signal is detected: check it, tell the UN, and don't reply without international consultation. It isn't binding, and scientists wrote it, not governments.

Put together, nobody can approve or refuse a transmission, nothing defines what it means to send a message "for humanity," and there's no agreed way to decide whether to answer an incoming signal.

II. The Scientific Debate

Supporters of sending make a few main points, If every civilisation only listens, nobody ever speaks, We've already been leaking signals for nearly a century, Anyone able to reach us would be far ahead of us technologically, so a message is unlikely to change whether they find us, And contact could bring huge scientific and medical benefits,

Critics point out that we know of eyxactly one intelligent species, and the record of contact between unequal civilisations on Earth isn't encouraging, The risk is lopsided, a friendly reply helps us, but a hostile one could cost the whole species, A message can't be called back once it's sent, and we have no idea how a different kind of mind would read it,

Many scientists land somewhere in between, They'd keep listening, pause active messaging for now, and try to build global agreement before anything else is sent.

III. Who Speaks for Earth?

Underneath all of this is a question about legitimacy, A message from a private group implicitly speaks for humanity, whatever its authors say, Countries without large radio telescopes may argue that a decision affecting everyone shouldn't be left to a small club of states and wealthy individuals, Content is its own fight, should a message admit to war and inequality, or show only our best side? And if a reply does come, what happens when governments can't agree on what it says?

Possible Solutions

These are starting points for some basic arguments but i request you try to be creative and look for more from your own mind or make an alliance and talk about it together and think of good solutions together.

1. **Global moratorium:** Ban deliberate high power transmissions to other star systems until a treaty is in place, Simple and cautious, but hard to verify, and countries that don't sign can ignore it.

2. **Licensing authority:** A UN backed body, perhaps under UNOOSA or alongside the ITU, would approve any transmission above a set power, This raises questions about who sits on it, who has a veto, and whether the big powers would dominate it.

3. **Global consultation:** METI is allowed only after open worldwide consultation and a supermajority vote, Democratic, but slow, and deadlock is likely.

4. **Stronger state responsibility:** Countries must authorise transmissions, register them publicly, and notify the UN under Article VI, This works within existing law, but a determined sender can find a lenient jurisdiction.

5. **Scientific code of conduct:** Endorse a voluntary code written by scientific bodies, Quick and expert led, with no way to enforce it.

6. **Content standards:** Limit messages to math and basic science, and keep out anything military or political. That cuts some risk, but someone has to decide what counts.

7. **Post detection and reply treaty:** A binding protocol for verifying a signal, disclosing it, sharing the data, and deciding whether to respond, It prepares us for contact but doesn't touch outgoing messages.

8. **Permanent Planetary Message Council:** A standing, regionally balanced body overseeing both listening and sending, Good for long term governance, expensive, and likely to worry countries guarding their sovereignty.

Whatever you propose, a resolution should say whether it allows, restricts, or bans messaging, who approves it and how they're chosen, how private actors are covered, what the penalties are, who writes the content, what happens if a reply arrives, and how developing countries get a real voice.

Important Stakeholders

United States: Sent the Arecibo Message and is home to the SETI Institute and the Breakthrough Initiatives, Its large private space sector makes control harder, and it has generally favoured scientific freedom and light regulation.

China: Runs FAST, the world's largest single dish radio telescope, which includes SETI among its aims, Increasingly influential in space governance and may prefer state led management.

Russia: Took part in early METI through Cosmic Call and the Teen Age Message, Protective of state authority in space.

Ukraine: Its Yevpatoria dish was used for Cosmic Call, and the facility is caught up in the territorial conflict.

Norway: Hosts the EISCAT radar used for Sónar Calling and tends to stress the rule of law.

India and Japan: Both have growing space programmes and strong astronomy communities. India often argues for developing world equity, and Japan tends to prefer orderly, treaty based solutions.

United Kingdom, France, and Germany: Solid research bases, and usually keen on multilateral processes.

Australia and South Africa: They host the Square Kilometre Array, which could become the most powerful detection network ever built, so they have a lot riding on how it's governed.

Chile: Hosts many of the world's best observatories and is a strong voice for protecting dark and radio quiet skies.

Brazil, Nigeria, Indonesia, Mexico, Kenya, and Egypt: Influential countries without big radio astronomy facilities, Expect them to ask for representation, technology sharing, and a real say in any governing body.

Luxembourg and the United Arab Emirates: Fast growing commercial space hubs that want predictable rules for private companies.

Austria: Home to UNOOSA in Vienna and a regular supporter of the UN's central role.

Private companies: The SETI Institute, METI International, the Breakthrough Initiatives, and the International Academy of Astronautics will likely act as expert voices. The ITU would be a natural partner for any enforcement system.

Glossary

Active SETI: See METI.

Common Heritage of Mankind: A legal principle that certain areas belong to all of humanity and can't be owned by any state or company.

Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence (METI): Deliberately sending signals meant to be received by other civilisations.

Outer Space Law: The treaties and principles that govern activity in outer space, led by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

Post Detection Protocols: Agreed steps after a signal is detected, such as verifying it and announcing it, They exist only as non binding guidelines.

Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI): The passive search for signals from other civilisations.

State Responsibility: The idea, from Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty, that states answer internationally for the space activities of their nationals and companies.

Further References

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