Overcoming opposition, Israel elected to UN space committee

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Overcoming opposition from Palestinian diplomats and several Arab states, an Israeli representative was elected by the UN General Assembly Tuesday to sit on the international body’s “Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space” (COPUOS).

Keren Shahar, the director of the Treaties Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will serve as Israel’s representative on the bureau, making the Jewish State one of the six countries to head up the 84-member organization.

In addition to Israel, Brazil, Mexico, Poland, South Africa and Indonesia were also elected Tuesday to the COPUOS bureau. Israel first joined the space organization in 2015.

COPUOS is charged by the UN with “governing the exploration and use of space for the benefit of all humanity, reviewing international cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space, encouraging space research, and studying legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space,” according the organization’s charter.

According to Israel’s mission to the UN, “adversaries led efforts to thwart the representative’s election despite the fact that she had been selected by the Western European and Others (WEOG) regional group as their candidate for the position.”

Israel’s ambassador to the UN Danny Danon welcomed the decision.

“We have proven once again that Israel can succeed in all roles as we spearhead positive new initiatives as an equal partner in the UN. We will continue to stand strong against attempts to harm Israel in the international arena,” he said.

In June 2016, Israel was elected for the first time ever to head a permanent committee at the UN General Assembly, despite intense efforts by Arab and Muslim states to stop the nomination.