

## **Outer Space: Statement for the 71st Session of the General Assembly First Committee**

The many challenges facing the outer space domain can be generally grouped into two broad categories. On the one hand, there are those related to the risks to space assets that result from normal peaceful space operations, such as unintentional interference with space assets. On the other, there are clear risks associated with a potential arms race in outer space.

While there is widespread international agreement to address the former, we are greatly concerned that discussions related to space weaponization and the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) have yet to gain sufficient traction. We cannot and should not be content with addressing only some of the challenges facing the space domain, while turning a blind eye to others just as critical.

The existing legal regime related to outer space does not tackle the potential weaponization of this critical domain. Moreover, the rapidity with which space-related military technologies are being developed seems to be widening the gap between military applications that may trigger an arms race in outer space and the precarious normative architecture that should regulate them.

It is true that the 1967 Outer Space Treaty specifically bans signatory states from placing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in orbit and calls for the peaceful exploration of outer space. However, it does not explicitly refer to the placement or use of other types of weapons in outer space or the use of earth-based weapons against space targets—activities which clearly need regulation, if not outright prohibition.

The development of technologies dedicated to military purposes continues to increase. Ground-based anti-satellite weapons (ASATs) have been tested; communications satellites are routinely and deliberately jammed; nations have conducted ASAT tests; missile defense systems have been used as ASATs; and precursor technologies that would allow space-to-space offensive capabilities have been developed.

Unfortunately, efforts to address the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) have been relegated to a diplomatic limbo.

The Conference on Disarmament, which has the primary responsibility for negotiations related to PAROS, has been deadlocked and unable to conduct any substantive negotiations for years. At the UN General Assembly, the annual PAROS resolution has not once been supported by the most advanced spacefaring nation in history—the United States. And any efforts to discuss such issues at COPUOS are routinely dismissed as falling outside the jurisdiction of this body.

Armed conflict in space would lead to devastating consequences for our daily life on earth and also affect the overall long-term sustainability and peaceful use of space.

In this context, we put forward the following five recommendations during this year's First Committee:

1. States should pledge not to use *any* space- or ground-based capabilities to deliberately damage or destroy space assets.
2. States should highlight the importance of preventing the weaponisation of outer space to preserve international peace and security and benefit all humankind.
3. States should mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty in 2017 by convening the first-ever OST conference of states parties.
4. States should indicate support for the negotiation of a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space and for interim transparency and confidence-building measures toward that end.
5. States should refrain from developing and deploying space-based weapons or weapons that target space-based assets, including antisatellite technologies.

Chair, the world has become increasingly reliant on space applications. The key challenge is to maintain a sustainable outer space domain so that the social and economic benefits derived from it can continue to be enjoyed by present and future generations. Given what is at stake, we believe that the need for policy discussions and legal instruments specifically related to PAROS should be self-evident.