



**Statement by Monsignor Simon Kassas**  
**First Secretary**  
**Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See**  
**Seventy-First Session of the United Nations General Assembly**  
**First Committee Agenda Item 96 (a):**  
**Prevention of an arms race in outer space**  
**New York, October 2016**

Mr Chair,

In the digital age, humanity has become ever more dependent on space technology for the conduct of everyday life and safeguarding the future. From banking to telecommunications, from navigation and traffic control to regulating water supplies and electrical grids, the peoples of the earth are dependent on satellite technology. These same technologies have led to rapid advances in the developing world, such as improvements in communications, banking and agriculture. Space technology, once the province of a few powers, has become a universal common good, essential for the survival and well-being of all humanity.

Given the universal dependence on these technologies, their vulnerability to attacks is a risk not just for a few nations but for all humanity. At a time when basic resources, like water and power, are tied to control systems linked by satellite communications, the very life blood of societies is vulnerable to attacks in outer space. The humanitarian consequences of a war in space would be devastating for populations far beyond those of adversary states. With fundamental activities dependent on space-based technology, the impact on civilian life would be calamitous.

It is imperative that our efforts to outlaw the use of weapons in outer space be sufficiently broad to take into account the changed conditions of contemporary life and the increase of risks to human civilization represented by the danger of war in space. Given the growing body of humanitarian law and increased concern for the humanitarian consequences of war, the integration of prohibitions designed for the protection of human infrastructure should become an essential component of outer space law.

Given the potential breadth and depth of the impact of armed conflict in space on life on earth, moreover, preservation of the principles of noncombatant immunity and discrimination will both be more important than ever and also more difficult to ensure. Armed conflict in space, especially with the ever-advancing weapons technology, may make it more difficult to contain war within the bounds of law. Therefore every effort must be made to prevent the expansion of state conflict to space. The risk of counter-population warfare through attacks on satellite technology must be checked by concerted international action.

The Conference on Disarmament should overcome its frustrating, years-long impasse and agree now to begin negotiations dealing with conventional weapons use in space, bearing in mind that weapons of various kinds might be launched from outside outer space. The United Nations Disarmament Commission should begin consideration of transparency-and confidence-building measures for space as proposed earlier this year by a number of States.

Our delegation reiterates our recommendation, made last year, that the adoption of an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities should be accomplished promptly, taking into account the availability of a draft Code. As we noted then, the Code would make an important contribution to international peace and security.

Collaboration in the peaceful development of outer space will provide further protection against armed conflict there. To this end, more attention ought to be given to the promotion of multilateral and international projects in space.

Space is a common heritage of all, an environment that we all depend on. We should ensure that we deal with it accordingly, and not make it another source or place of conflict.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.