



71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
First Committee
Thematic Debate on the Outer Space (disarmament aspects) cluster

Statement by
The delegation of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

18th October, 2016

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

It is in the common interest of all mankind to explore and use outer space for peaceful purposes. Outer space is part of the common heritage of all humanity and we all, irrespective of our levels of economic or scientific development, should have an equal opportunity to explore it for the common benefit of humankind.

Sri Lanka believes that space exploration and the utilization of outer space make invaluable contributions to the advancement of humankind. While space exploration offers abundant opportunities, it is incumbent upon those who explore and use it, to prevent outer space from becoming a place for an arms race.

With increased space activities, there are justifiable concerns that the space environment is gradually becoming congested. Potential militarization and the weaponization of the space environment is a prelude to the grave danger of outer space becoming a contested area and a source of conflict.

We have long held the view that the prevention of an arms race in outer space and keeping it free of conflict is essential to avert a grave danger for international peace and security.

We reaffirm our view that outer space must not be another arena for an arms race. Such a race will have dire consequences for entire humankind, posing a grave danger to the countries that have technological capacity to launch orbital objects and to those do not have such capacity alike. Placement of arms in outer space will not only threaten the security of outer space assets, but also will damage the Earths' biosphere.

We call upon all nations, especially those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and to refrain from pursuing action that would make outer space an arena for an arms race.

Mr. Chairman,

It would be imperative for Member States to strictly comply with the existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space and the existing legal regime governing the use of outer space. We believe that wide participation in the legal regime could also contribute to enhancing its effectiveness.

We are of the view that while such action is pursued to enhance the effectiveness of the existing legal regime, given the drastic changes that have taken place in the political atmosphere pertaining to the outer space sustainability and security, the existing legal framework governing the use of outer space must be further strengthened.

Mr. Chairman,

It is our firm conviction that the early conclusion of an International Agreement on the Prevention of the Arms Race in Outer Space would definitely strengthen the existing legal framework.

In this regard, we wish to reiterate the central role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum in negotiating such an agreement on prevention of an arms race in outer space. We are of the view the Conference on Disarmament should commence its work in this respect without delay.

Sri Lanka will extend its full support to such an endeavour as it has always supported initiatives that are aimed at preserving peace, preventing conflict and ensuring sustainability in the outer space environment.

In this context, I am pleased to inform you that this year also Egypt and Sri Lanka have together tabled the draft resolution on '*Prevention of an arms race in outer space*' which calls for negotiation of a multilateral instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space at the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka remains committed to striving with all States and other Stakeholders, to make outer space a place free from conflict and to prevent it from being an arena for an arms race. We look forward to constructive deliberations at this thematic session.

Thank you.