



# General Assembly

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**Seventy-eighth session**

Agenda item 97 (d)

**Prevention of an arms race in outer space: reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours**

## **Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 4 December 2023**

[*on the report of the First Committee (A/78/407, para. 15)*]

### **78/20. Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours**

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling its resolutions 75/36 of 7 December 2020 and 76/231 of 24 December 2021,*

*Recalling also its resolutions 68/50 of 5 December 2013, 77/40, 77/41 and 77/42 of 7 December 2022 and 77/250 of 30 December 2022,*

*Reaffirming the applicability of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, to outer space activities and the right of all States to explore and use outer space without discrimination of any kind, on a basis of equality and in accordance with such law, and emphasizing the importance of full compliance with such law,*

*Reaffirming also the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies,<sup>1</sup> and the obligations therein to explore and use outer space for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, to be guided by the principle of cooperation and mutual assistance, and to conduct all activities in outer space with due regard for the corresponding interests of all States parties to the Treaty,*

*Emphasizing the need to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable, secure and sustainable environment for the benefit of all and the significant contribution of outer space activities to social, economic, scientific and technological development, as well as to international peace and security,*

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843.



*Urging* all States, when developing, planning and executing their space activities, to remain committed to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space and to refrain from conducting activities contrary to their obligations under international law, including those that could threaten the ability of all States to freely use and explore outer space, now and in the future,

*Seriously concerned* about the possibility of an arms race in outer space, and reaffirming that the prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger for international peace and security, as well as being an essential condition for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

*Stressing* that the deliberate destruction of space systems increases the amount of long-lived orbital debris, the risk of in-orbit collisions and the potential for misunderstanding and miscalculations that could lead to conflict, and welcoming the commitment of several States not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests,

*Noting* the rapid advances of technologies in space systems, the uses of which are diverse and could have positive or negative effects on international security, and encouraging further discussion among States of the impact of these developments,

*Recognizing* the need for States to seek to avoid and mitigate the potential impact on peace and security arising from accidents, miscommunication or a lack of transparency, which could lead to miscalculations and the escalation of tensions and contribute to an arms race,

*Acknowledging* the importance of space systems in the provision of services critical to civilians, and concerned at the risk of harm arising from threats to these systems,

*Recalling* paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly,<sup>2</sup> in which it is stated that, in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, further measures should be taken and appropriate international negotiations held in accordance with the spirit of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies,

*Convinced* that possible solutions to outer space security, including norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, can involve a combination of legally binding obligations and political commitments, and that work in both of these areas can be further pursued in a progressive, sustained and complementary manner, without undermining existing legal obligations,

*Recognizing* that efforts to prevent an arms race and to prevent conflict from beginning in or extending into outer space must include consideration of the use of all potential technologies and means, whether on Earth or in outer space,

*Reiterating* the common objective of preventing an arms race in outer space in all its aspects and the consequent need for all States to work together to reduce threats to space systems through the further development and implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, including an appropriate combination of both political commitments and legally binding instruments, with the aim of preventing an arms race in outer space in all its aspects and of maintaining a peaceful, safe, stable, secure and sustainable outer space environment,

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<sup>2</sup> Resolution S-10/2.

*Reaffirming* that verification is one of the essential components of legally binding arms control instruments, and encouraging further consideration of effective verification regarding space systems,

*Recalling* the primary role of the Conference on Disarmament on questions relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects, including the weaponization of outer space and threats from capabilities on Earth, and the relevant responsibilities of the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission,

*Welcoming* the ongoing work by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the implementation of the 21 Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities,<sup>3</sup> which may have a positive effect on international peace and security,

*Welcoming also* the recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space in accordance with the recommendations set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities adopted by the Disarmament Commission at its substantive session of 2023,<sup>4</sup>

*Recognizing* the importance of the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women and men in discussions on reducing space threats through responsible behaviours and the need to address the possible differentiated impacts of such threats,

1. *Reaffirms* that all States must conduct their activities in the exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, in conformity with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, urges Member States to ensure that their space policies comply with their obligations, and encourages those States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the exploration and use of outer space to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to them in accordance with their national law;

2. *Welcomes* the deliberations held in 2022 and 2023 by the open-ended working group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours established by the General Assembly in its resolution [76/231](#), which, together with the working papers and presentations submitted to the Assembly, constitute an important contribution to outer space security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space;

3. *Expresses its appreciation* to the participants of the open-ended working group for their constructive contribution to its work;

4. *Decides* to convene, in Geneva, a new open-ended working group, building on the work of the 2022–2023 open-ended working group and other relevant bodies, including the Group of Government Experts established in its resolution [77/250](#), and the existing international legal framework, including principles of international law, to further elaborate the concept, and to make recommendations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space through the development of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, including, but not exclusively, in the following areas:

- (a) Intentional damage to and destruction of space systems;

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<sup>3</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/74/20)*, annex II.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid., Seventy-eighth Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/78/42)*, annex.

- (b) Threats to the safe operation of space objects;
- (c) Rendezvous operations and proximity operations that could increase the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation;
- (d) Protecting critical space-based services to civilians as well as services that support humanitarian operations;
- (e) Other activities and measures that could reduce the risk of unintended escalation and conflict;

and to consider how the implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours could be monitored and verified, including through the provision of capacity-building, cooperation on space situational awareness and the possible establishment of a mechanism for inter-State coordination and consultation on matters pertaining to space security, and how they would contribute to the negotiation of legally binding instruments, including on the prevention of an arms race in outer space;

5. *Also decides* that the open-ended working group shall submit its report to the General Assembly at its eighty-first session, and that it shall adopt its final conclusions and recommendations by consensus;

6. *Further decides* that the open-ended working group shall hold a two-day organizational session and two substantive sessions of five days each in 2025, and two substantive sessions of five days each in 2026, and that the Chair may also hold intersessional consultative meetings with interested parties to exchange views on the issues within the mandate of the open-ended working group;

7. *Reaffirms* that intergovernmental organizations and other entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the work of the General Assembly and representatives of non-governmental organizations that are in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996, may participate, including by speaking and submitting documents, in the formal and informal meetings of the open-ended working group as observers;

8. *Requests* the Chair of the open-ended working group to draw up a list of representatives of other relevant non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the private sector who may participate, including by speaking and submitting documents, in the open-ended working group, taking into account the principles of transparency and equitable geographical representation, with due regard for gender parity, to submit the proposed list to Member States for their consideration on a non-objection basis<sup>5</sup> and to bring the list to the attention of the open-ended working group for a final decision by the open-ended working group on participation;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide all necessary assistance to the open-ended working group and its Chair and to transmit its report to the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission;

10. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-ninth session, under the item entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space”, the sub-item entitled “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”.

*42nd plenary meeting  
4 December 2023*

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<sup>5</sup> The list will include proposed as well as final names. The general basis of any objections, if requested by one or more States Members of the United Nations, will be made known to the Chair of the open-ended working group, the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat and the requester.