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Agenda item 98 (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 24 December 2021

[*on the report of the First Committee (A/76/442, para. 15)*]

76/231. Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 68/50 of 5 December 2013 and 75/35 of 7 December 2020,

Recalling also its resolution 75/36 of 7 December 2020, in which it requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the further development and implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours and on the reduction of the risks of misunderstanding and miscalculations with respect to outer space, and to submit a substantive report, with an annex containing these views, to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session,

Reaffirming the applicability of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, to activities in outer space 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,¹ and the obligations for States parties to the Treaty to explore and use outer space for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, and to be guided by the principle of cooperation and mutual assistance,

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

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843.



of Outer Space Activities,² which may have a positive effect on international peace and security,

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,

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,

Stressing that the creation of long-lived orbital debris arising from the deliberate destruction of space systems increases the risk of in-orbit collisions and the potential for misunderstanding and miscalculations that could lead to conflict,

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,

Recalling paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly,³ 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 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,

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,

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

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,

Stressing that uses of these technologies and means for purposes inconsistent with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security, including against signals for operators and users and the terrestrial infrastructure supporting space systems, can lead to the perception of threats on Earth as well as in outer space

² *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/74/20)*, annex II.

³ Resolution S-10/2.

and can have destabilizing effects on peace and security, and that such threats already exist in outer space and on Earth,

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,

Reiterating the 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 with the aim of maintaining a peaceful, safe, stable, secure and sustainable outer space environment, which might, as appropriate and without prejudice, contribute to further consideration of legally binding instruments on the prevention of an arms race in outer space,

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,

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

1. *Affirms* 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, and urges Member States to take this into account when formulating their space policies;

2. *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 those treaties in accordance with their national law, as well as incorporating them into their national legislation;

3. *Expresses the desire* that all Member States reach a common understanding of how best to act to reduce threats to space systems in order to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment, free from an arms race and conflict, for the benefit of all, and consider establishing channels of direct communication, including for the management of perceptions of threat;

4. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution [75/36](#)⁴ and his recommendation that Member States study the ideas contained therein and decide on an inclusive process to take these issues forward at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly;

5. *Decides* to convene, beginning in 2022, an open-ended working group:

(a) To take stock of the existing international legal and other normative frameworks concerning threats arising from State behaviours with respect to outer space;

(b) To consider current and future threats by States to space systems, and actions, activities and omissions that could be considered irresponsible;

(c) To make recommendations on possible norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours relating to threats by States to space systems, including, as appropriate, how they would contribute to the negotiation of legally binding instruments, including on the prevention of an arms race in outer space;

(d) To submit a report to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session;

⁴ [A/76/77](#).

6. *Also decides* that the open-ended working group shall work on the basis of consensus, hold its organizational session in Geneva for two days, and meet in Geneva for two sessions of five days each in both 2022 and 2023, with the participation of intergovernmental organizations and other entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the work of the General Assembly, as well as organizations and bodies of the United Nations, and with the attendance of other international organizations, commercial actors and civil society representatives, in accordance with established practice, and further decides 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. *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;

8. *Continues to invite* States members and observers of the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission to inform those bodies of their national space security policies, strategies or doctrines, on a voluntary basis, in accordance with and in support of the mandates of those bodies;

9. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-seventh 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”.

54th (resumed) plenary meeting
24 December 2021
