

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and seventy-seventh plenary meeting

Held via videoconference on Tuesday, 1 June 2021, at 3 p.m. Central European Summer Time

President: Mr. Salomon Eheth(Cameroon)

The President: I call to order the 1577th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I will now turn to the speakers remaining on my list for today's thematic discussion. I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hwang, Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, in keeping with its long-standing position, France is committed to preserving peace and the safety and security of outer space activities. It is strongly committed to respecting the key principles governing such activities, including freedom of access to space and its peaceful use under the Charter of the United Nations and the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. My country is also intent on ensuring the safety, security and long-term sustainability of space activities, and wishes to prevent the deterioration of conditions for the use of outer space and to preserve access for future generations. The space sector is evolving. It is changing rapidly and gaining in importance. As the experts reminded us this morning, space has become essential due to the applications that affect everyday life and the civilian and military purposes to which it can be put.

This growing use of space means that our dependence on space capabilities will only increase. It also poses new challenges in terms of safety and security. The benefits we derive from space applications are under serious threat from the ongoing deterioration of the space environment owing to the risk of incidents and the growing number of deliberate destabilizing and irresponsible hostile acts, which fuel mistrust between States and, in some cases, can considerably increase the proliferation of space debris. The rising amount of space debris poses a major risk to our space activities and we must address this problem, first and foremost by discouraging activities that could lead to the intentional creation of debris. If we do not act, this situation is likely to worsen, and the existing mechanisms and the work under way will not fully overcome these challenges. It is important, therefore, for us all to come together and reflect on how best to enhance the safety and security of activities and reduce the risks and threats in space, in all their aspects.

Mr. President, I would like to reiterate my country's views on the principles necessary for the development of a legally binding instrument on outer space. As has been stated on previous occasions, France shares the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space and is not opposed in principle to drafting instruments and launching initiatives aimed at achieving that goal. Nevertheless, such an instrument should truly provide increased security in space. In order to do so, we believe that it must contain precise definitions and be comprehensive in scope. To be effective, it must also be verifiable.

On this point, I must say that my country's assessment differs from that presented by our distinguished colleague, Mr. Hassan, on the issues of definition and verification, which we consider to be essential if we are to achieve our objectives of effective regulation. The draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects does not meet these requirements. The draft treaty tabled in the Conference on Disarmament and the corresponding resolutions presented in the First Committee contain many flaws. These documents do not include a definition of a weapon in space, which, given the inherent dual nature of space objects, is a difficult task. They focus on only one type of threat, ignoring Earth-to-space threats or those resulting from hostile or aggressive behaviour. The security challenges posed by the rapidly changing space environment call for a collective and pragmatic response based on measures that can be implemented immediately. We have a shared interest in promoting the principle of the responsible use of space. We must seek to build trust and transparency among all present and future spacefaring nations. The priority today must be to promote transparency and confidence-building measures and the adoption of norms of responsible behaviour by space actors, including a prohibition on the intentional production of multiple forms of long-lived debris. A capabilities-based approach aimed at banning certain systems does not seem relevant or effective. Indeed, a large proportion of space assets are now dual-use, which makes it difficult to distinguish between military and civilian, or offensive and defensive, capabilities and, ultimately, to decide which to ban.

More broadly, my country recalls the difficulty of defining a weapon in outer space, since any space object can be used as a weapon. Certain capabilities necessary to maintain free and viable access to space, such as on-orbit servicing and active debris removal capabilities, can also be used aggressively. A behaviour-based approach now seems to be the most appropriate and pragmatic way to improve space safety in the immediate future, as it

will regulate the conduct of certain activities so that they cannot be perceived as aggressive, thereby reducing the risks of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. This approach aims to reduce the destabilizing potential of these activities and minimize the risk of escalation and conflict in space. Furthermore, an approach that focuses on the effects of behaviour on space systems, the environment or people would be more sustainable as it cannot be superseded by technological advances in the future.

In that regard, we welcome the adoption of General Assembly resolution 75/36, tabled by the United Kingdom and sponsored and co-drafted by my own country, on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. We believe that this initiative offers a way out of the diplomatic stalemate that has prevailed in recent years with regard to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It encourages States parties to study the risks and threats in space and to characterize irresponsible and responsible behaviours in order to provide input for the report of the Secretary-General. The resolution also initiates an inclusive, gradual and open process of establishing norms and defining responsible behaviour. My country has sent its national contribution to the Secretary-General and invites the member States of the Conference on Disarmament to take it on board. It characterizes responsible, irresponsible or threatening actions in terms of their effects and their impact on international security and safety, and proposes focusing on norms concerning three categories of behaviour: intentional behaviour likely to have a significant impact on the space environment, behaviour that poses a heightened risk of misunderstanding and behaviour that may have an impact on the security of persons and property.

Mr. President, the fresh analysis of the space environment and its threats and risks has led France to adapt its national space strategy. The space strategy published in June 2019 is defensive. It is in line with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Space activities must be carried out in accordance with general international law and the Charter, which applies in its entirety to outer space. France is prepared to present its space policy to the Conference on Disarmament, as States have been invited to do in accordance with resolution 75/36, in the near future. This is an important measure to enhance transparency, while reducing the risk of misjudgement or miscalculation.

The President: I thank Ambassador Hwang and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Liddle of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's thematic discussion on agenda item 3, prevention of an arms race in outer space – a topic to which the United Kingdom attaches great importance. I also greatly appreciated the four excellent presentations we heard this morning. And let me join you in welcoming our new colleague from Sweden, Ambassador Jardfelt.

As Ms. Archinard reminded us this morning, the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space has been on the Conference's agenda for three decades now. Despite strenuous efforts over that time, whether here, in the Disarmament Commission or in the General Assembly, it is fair to say that progress has been slow and the very real difficulties presented by the nature of the space domain, which my colleague, the Ambassador of France, just recalled, have not been overcome. At the same time, the complexity, range of applications and number of space systems has grown at an extraordinary rate, as has all States' dependence on those systems for their prosperity and security.

In December 2020, 164 United Nations Member States voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 75/36, on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. The broad support for this resolution demonstrates that there is the will to try a new approach to the prevention of an arms race in outer space – complementing, not competing with, others. We believe that there is a growing recognition both of the strategic importance of space systems to all countries, and of the need for a new, inclusive, holistic approach to the long-standing problem of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The United Kingdom initiated this new process because we believe that coming to a common understanding of responsible behaviours can help to avoid miscalculation and escalation that could lead to conflict – which could have a catastrophic impact – and to address the factors that could drive an arms race in outer space.

The resolution asked States to study the threats to space systems and share their ideas on the further development and implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours and on the reduction of the risks of misunderstanding and miscalculation with respect to outer space. We were pleased with the response from States and civil society to the call for contributions to the Secretary-General's report. I would like to thank all of those who answered that call.

In our own submission, we set out how space operators must deal with a number of challenges to operating in space. Those challenges include what we refer to as "hazards" that could harm a space system – these are generally naturally occurring in the space environment, or are the result of space activity (for example, debris). Much progress has been made on addressing these challenges in other forums, as we heard from Ms. Archinard.

We refer to the second category of challenges as "threats", meaning actions or activities using capabilities that threaten the space systems of another State. A number of States already have the ability to threaten the space systems of other countries, through capabilities such as direct-ascent weapons, co-orbital weapons, directed-energy weapons, electronic weapons and cyber capabilities. This is not theoretical: these technologies already exist and have been deployed. This being the case, the call not to place weapons in space looks outdated and ignores the wide variety of capabilities that threaten space systems today.

Our submission suggests that seven types of activity would benefit from further, expert-level discussion: (i) destruction of, or threat to destroy, a satellite; (ii) use of direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles; (iii) non-kinetic threats, such as lasers; (iv) threats aimed at creating loss of imagery or sight of space assets; (v) interference with position, navigation and timing signals from satellites; (vi) reduction of the ability of a ground operator to control a satellite; and (vii) rendezvous operations and proximity operations.

The United Kingdom does not wish to be prescriptive in setting out how we might address these types of activity. Nevertheless, our submission does include, as a means of beginning a discussion, some examples of how responsible behaviours might reduce risks related to these areas. I will not go into those in detail now, but they are of course available on the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs website. The United Kingdom looks forward to the Secretary-General's report and to the discussions with the United Nations membership that will follow.

Mr. President, General Assembly resolution 75/36 also invited States to inform this Conference of "their national space security policies, strategies or doctrines, on a voluntary basis, in accordance with and in support of" the mandate of this body.

This year, the United Kingdom will make a number of announcements on its space policy, building on the commitment given in the recently published Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy to "make the United Kingdom a meaningful actor in space, with an integrated space strategy, which brings together military and civil space policy for the first time". The Integrated Review notes that space will be a domain of increasing opportunity, as the application of new technologies in space enables new possibilities – from commercial opportunities to international development and climate action. But it also recognizes that increasing commercial and military use of space will make it an important sphere of competition; there will be considerable risks to strategic stability if this is not managed and regulated effectively. As such, the Integrated Review set out the strategy of the United Kingdom both to support the growth of the United Kingdom commercial space sector, including the ability to launch satellites from the United Kingdom by 2022, and to protect our interests in a more congested and contested space domain.

The new National Space Council, which has the status of a Cabinet Committee, is developing the country's first National Space Strategy. We hope to be able to present this strategy later in this year's Conference on Disarmament session. Following the National Space Strategy, we also intend to publish a Defence Space Strategy. We will be fully transparent about these strategies and will share them when they are finalized.

One element that has already been established, since 1 April this year, is the United Kingdom Space Command for Defence. It is a joint command staffed from the Royal Navy, the British Army, the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Civil Service. When fully operationally

capable, United Kingdom Space Command will provide command and control of all of the country's space capabilities. These include the United Kingdom Space Operations Centre, whose mission is to understand and monitor the space domain in order to protect, defend and assure access to the country's on-orbit assets or dependencies; the SKYNET Satellite Communications system; the space monitoring and ballistic missile early warning station at RAF Fylingdales; and other enabling capabilities.

Mr. President, the continued engagement of the United Kingdom in international efforts to develop norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour in space, to reduce the risk of conflict and to manage threats in or arising from space is an integral part of this strategy. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/36 later in the summer. In the meantime, we also must turn our minds to the question of what form the "further discussion" provided for in resolution 75/36 will look like.

We have always said that, as well as being inclusive, the process needs to be organic. We know there will be different views on how to approach these challenges, and we need to reconcile them if we are to make progress. The process will therefore need to evolve as it goes along, without prejudice to the form our solutions will take.

We note that many of the national submissions call for a further phase of collective work to reach a shared understanding of what constitutes responsible, irresponsible and threatening behaviour for space systems; what norms, rules and principles already exist; and what we need to do to develop that framework further. We will consult member States intensively over the summer as we prepare the draft resolution for the next session of the First Committee in October.

Finally, Mr. President, let me once again express my gratitude to everyone who has shared their perspectives on these issues. We look forward to working with you all in the coming months and years to develop an approach to outer space security that works for everyone.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Zniber of Morocco.

Mr. Zniber (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament which – in addition to bringing us your personal skills – provides us with an opportunity to transmit important messages regarding disarmament and international peace and security priorities. I also thank the experts from the Permanent Mission of Egypt, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for their exhaustive presentation of the points they addressed as an introduction to today's meeting.

I would like to begin my statement with an observation that is certainly well-known but nevertheless worth remembering. Space, as a whole, more than simply a challenge to overcome, is an asset and a resource for the economic and social development of nations. In the early days, space was a new frontier and was seen as a place solely for civilian activities that would allow natural disasters and crises to be anticipated using new technology designed to make life easier on Earth. For several decades now, we have known that our concept of space has changed and that it has become a highly strategic issue between certain Powers.

Without dwelling further on areas of divergence, and as a contribution to our debate today, I would like to recall that, in my country, the governance of space policy is the responsibility of two institutions: the Royal Centre for Remote Sensing and the Royal Centre for Space Studies and Research. These two space science institutions are concerned with the practical applications of space technology, training and the transfer of know-how in areas such as agriculture, forest and water resources, geology and mining, natural hazards, land-use planning, ocean science and the management of the Kingdom's coastline.

As part of its ambition to align with international standards in this area, the Kingdom of Morocco launched two satellites into orbit, one in November 2017 and the other in November 2018. These two devices covered no less than 250,000 km² in 2019 and produced some 370 maps, contributing to the advancement and development of several sectors and areas, including agriculture, environment and climate change prediction. In addition, 2020 marked the Kingdom's launch of a programme to build nanosatellites at specialized

universities. The goal of this programme is to develop scientific research in Morocco and to gradually and progressively train specialized human resources in space technology. Moreover, in Marrakech in April 2019, Morocco hosted the first Global Conference on Space for Emerging Countries, organized by the International Astronautical Federation and the Royal Centre for Remote Sensing with the support of the National Centre for Space Studies. The aim of the Conference, the first of its kind, was to actively engage emerging economies in space activities by highlighting the socioeconomic benefits of space applications, explaining the various financial models for optimizing resources for national space programmes, identifying opportunities for technology and skills transfer, promoting understanding of the basic infrastructure requirements for implementing national space programmes and raising awareness of the key legislative and policy elements that should be taken into account when laying the foundations of national space programmes.

In its desire to participate fully in space-sector innovation in French-speaking Africa, the Kingdom of Morocco has hosted the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology in the French Language for some 20 years. The Centre is a United Nations-affiliated body whose mission is to organize regional training courses, seminars, workshops, conferences and technical expert meetings to improve the technical skills of specialists, educators, administrators and policymakers and to keep them informed of developments in space technology applications.

Before concluding, Mr. President, I would like to emphasize that all my country's actions are of course geared towards the peaceful use of outer space and I believe that Morocco therefore acts as a strong advocate for the peaceful use of outer space, including here in the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to stress the major concerns, not only of the Kingdom of Morocco, but of many States which, both in this area and with regard to nuclear weapons and other sensitive issues, find themselves obliged to work towards the adoption of an international legal instrument which will provide the best possible framework to strike a balance between the Powers, in order to maintain a stability which is already fragile and, to be very frank, under increasing threat. National policies on the militarization of space and the development of technical capabilities can pose a real threat to international security, which should be addressed without further delay. Although the Conference on Disarmament has not yet been able to adopt a binding normative framework on this issue, the discussions under the agenda items will help us build bridges and, at the very least, reduce misunderstandings about the views of each country concerned.

Lastly, Mr. President, we should work together to put an end to this policy of deterrence by force, which has brought very little success in other matters, the details of which you are aware.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Zniber. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Argentina.

Ms. Porta (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank Mr. Bassem Hassan of the Permanent Mission of Egypt, the representatives of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and Ms. Natália Archinard of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland for their presentations, which undoubtedly helped stimulate the debate in this Conference on today's topic.

First of all, Mr. President. I would like to stress that my delegation recognizes the common interest of all humankind and the sovereign right of every State to participate in the exploration and use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes and is convinced of the benefits its use can bring to human development.

In this regard, we reaffirm the fundamental role of the Outer Space Treaty in maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and in furthering the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international co-operation.

In the framework of this thematic debate, my delegation would like to emphasize that the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including a ban to deploy weapons therein, would avert a grave danger to international peace and security. In this regard, Argentina supports the negotiation within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty

banning the placement of weapons in outer space. Pending that, international transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space are undoubtedly desirable and necessary. It might even be useful to adopt binding measures such as those mentioned above, in particular those relating to the notification and registration of outer space activities.

My delegation also supports a comprehensive approach, meaning that an instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space should cover both the regulation of behaviours and the control of capabilities, equipment and technologies. Likewise, and taking into account the dual nature of space technology, we believe that, during the negotiation of such an instrument, particular attention should be paid to avoiding elements that could affect the right to develop and acquire technology and equipment for the peaceful use of outer space. In this vein, it is also important that any instrument developed should contain provisions on building capacity around the obligations set forth therein.

With regard to the debate on verification of a future instrument, my delegation is of the view that this element represents one of the main challenges to the development of a binding instrument. In this regard, my delegation maintains that different types of threats should necessarily be associated with different verification mechanisms.

My delegation also stresses the importance, when negotiating a treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, of drawing on the outcome of the deliberations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space that have taken place over the past few years in different working groups and expert groups in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

Finally, Mr. President, my delegation would like to stress that, while the existing legal framework can certainly be applied to outer space activities, the particular nature of outer space may give rise to the need for a specific instrument for the prevention of an arms race in outer space that could include elements not covered by other instruments – for example, the deployment of conventional weapons – on the one hand, and voluntary and mandatory transparency and confidence-building measures, on the other, and codify agreed interpretations of the way in which the pre-existing legal framework applies to outer space.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Spain.

Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor during your presidency, please allow me to extend my most sincere congratulations to you and to offer you my delegation's full cooperation in ensuring that the work under your presidency is crowned with the success it merits. I would also like to thank you for the timetable you submitted on 21 May indicating the dates of the plenary sessions, their topics and the panellists. This document facilitates and brings predictability to our work, for which we are grateful. I also value the presentations made by the panellists, which help us to frame our interventions.

Mr. President, the arms race in outer space is an increasingly important issue. In recent years, we have witnessed a multiplication of activities in outer space, and the parties involved have both multiplied and diversified. In short, we are seeing outer space turn into a source of potential threats to global security if behaviours there are not duly regulated. Capabilities or technologies that decades ago belonged to science fiction are now a reality. And the Conference on Disarmament must not turn a blind eye to these developments.

Indeed, the security and sustainability of outer space concern us all, without exception. Outer space provides a window of opportunity for civilian, commercial and military actors, with rapidly developing technologies that further enhance its potential. And this potential, if misused or misdirected, can spiral into cyber threats, space debris, non-compliance with satellite position assignments and other technical and security problems. In short, space is changing and becoming ever more competitive, but activities and behaviours in outer space are not sufficiently regulated.

In this regard, the rules derived from the San Francisco Charter, the Outer Space Treaty, the Hague Code of Conduct and even the guidelines adopted by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space that were presented to us today are not sufficient. It is therefore necessary for the Conference on Disarmament to equip itself as soon as possible with a programme of work that will enable us to negotiate and define a legally binding

instrument regulating civilian security, military and commercial activities in outer space. This is a big ambition. Some delegations even consider it impossible. But, at the same time, it is a priority for global security, for the security of all, because any act, malicious or not, carried out in space can have very serious consequences on Earth.

Outer space needs more transparency, more predictability, and this will lead to greater security and greater sustainability. In this regard, communication channels must be established to enable the exchange of information between space operators and to establish a register of operators with information on what they do, how they do it and where they do it in order to enable the management of space traffic, focussing on coordination and, above all, on building trust between operators, be they civilian, military or commercial.

Mr. President, in this context, I would like to make reference, as have other delegations before me, to General Assembly resolution 75/36 on responsible behaviours in outer space, co-sponsored by Spain and adopted last year by an overwhelming majority. This resolution establishes a new, constructive, comprehensive, pragmatic and inclusive framework. It is a framework that allows the international community to reflect on what constitutes threats and responsible or irresponsible behaviours in outer space, through exchange of information and multilateral talks. For Spain, this process in itself has value. That is why my country has already submitted the national report requested in the aforementioned resolution to enable the Secretary-General of the United Nations to prepare a report which, we hope, will provide a solid basis for future negotiations. My delegation also believes that these negotiations and future discussions should be as inclusive as possible, involving civil society, academia and the business sector. Without those actors, we cannot talk about outer space today – and perhaps it would have been useful to also hear from a panellist from the private sector today.

Spain supports the process initiated pursuant to this resolution and encourages those that have not yet done so to come on board. As the Conference on Disarmament, it is our duty to identify threats, distinguish between responsible and irresponsible behaviours and, ultimately, contribute to a safe, secure and sustainable outer space.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain. The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, at the outset allow me to express my gratitude to you for organizing this meeting, which focuses on one of the core agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament. I also would like to express my appreciation to the panellists for their very comprehensive and interesting presentations on this important topic.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement of the Group of 21 and would like to add some comments in its national capacity. Outer space is the common heritage of humankind, and space technology has become an integral part of our daily lives, in the context, for example, of scientific research, communication, weather monitoring, detection of natural disasters and so on. However, a growing number of actors in outer space and the rapid development of space technology have significant impacts on the security and environment of outer space. Although the Outer Space Treaty provides for the peaceful use of outer space, there is worldwide concern over the increasing risk of an arms race in outer space that could turn outer space into a new battlefield or a domain of military confrontation. Such development poses a serious threat to global peace and security and could jeopardize the peaceful use of outer space.

Mr. President, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains firm in its position opposing the militarization of outer space. It is also against double standard practices in the exploration and use of outer space. The peaceful use of outer space should be accessible to all nations without any discrimination. At the same time, my delegation underlines the importance of transparency in outer space activities to ensure its security and peaceful use. In this respect, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has supported the General Assembly resolutions regarding the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Mr. President, the prevention of an arms race in outer space has been one of the key issues in the Conference on Disarmament discussions. Paragraph 80 of the Final Document

of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly states 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”. Since the existing international instruments are insufficient to address the new challenges faced in outer space security and safety, it is a matter of vital importance to establish a legal framework for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. And resolving this issue is the priority task of this Conference.

In this context, my delegation welcomes the updated draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, jointly submitted by the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation, which would make a positive contribution to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This text would provide a good basis for substantive discussion in the Conference on Disarmament leading towards the possible commencement of negotiations.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is prepared to make a constructive contribution to the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space and will continue to support global efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Germany.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, let me first congratulate you on the assumption of this important duty and reassure you of my delegation’s full support. Please let me also warmly welcome the new Ambassador of Sweden, Ms. Jardfelt, and I would also like to commend the panellists of this morning’s session for their insightful and stimulating presentations.

Mr. President, addressing security challenges posed by the space domain is more urgent than ever, due to evolving technology and developments, the increasing relevance of outer space for security, the increasing dependence on space assets and services as well as the increasing number of objects in space and space debris.

Growing risks and threats, in particular the ongoing development of counter-space capabilities, jeopardize our joint goal of free access to and the safe, secure and sustainable use of outer space. This is exacerbated by dual-use issues and ambiguities regarding the purposes of certain objects, as well as the intent behind their use; insufficient transparency also increases the risk of miscalculation and escalation in space.

Against this background of an increasingly challenging security environment, Germany remains fully committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. However, the current legal and arms control framework is insufficient to address all the threats and security risks in outer space and the evolving counter-space capabilities. Similar to areas such as cyberweapons or lethal autonomous weapons systems, outer space security demands new arms control approaches.

At this point in time and considering such characteristics of outer space as dual-use issues and the difficulties of attribution and verification, the most pragmatic and realistic way to increase security is to improve confidence as well as to prevent misconceptions and miscalculations. It is our strong belief that this can best be achieved by agreeing upon norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour.

For that reason, Germany is an ardent supporter of General Assembly resolution 75/36 and the process set up therein, including an international exchange on perceived security threats and risks related to outer space and ideas on how to mitigate these.

Germany contributed with a national report and welcomes the various national submissions in implementation of resolution 75/36. We very much look forward to the Secretary-General’s report, of which we saw an outline today, which will pave the way for the further elaboration of the topic during this year’s meetings of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

Our goal is increased joint understanding and awareness on the part of the international community of the threats and security risks related to outer space and an actual agreement on and implementation of rules of responsible behaviour. Space is a global commons to be used for the benefit and in the interest of all humankind, as so many delegates have stated today. Thus, security risks emanating from a destabilized space environment

carry a negative impact for all States that depend on outer space services. Therefore, international consideration of threats and risks to outer space systems, as well as measures to mitigate and reduce them, is necessary.

In this context, it is important to stress that we do not see resolution 75/36 as being in opposition to the Russian-Chinese approach. Rather, agreeing on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour will be the first, pragmatic step towards increasing security and confidence in relation to outer space. Ultimately, this might pave the way for a more comprehensive, effective and verifiable legally binding instrument designed to cover all relevant threats related to outer space.

To summarize, Mr. President, Germany remains fully committed to engaging constructively with the international community in order to build trust and confidence to promote the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable outer space environment, to be used peacefully by current and future generations.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, I would like to begin by welcoming the Ambassador of Sweden to the Conference on Disarmament family. The Chinese delegation would also like to thank you for organizing today's thematic discussion among Conference member States on the agenda item concerning prevention of an arms race in outer space. I thank the four keynote speakers for their statements this morning. The enthusiastic response to the call for speakers for today's meeting fully reflects the great importance attached by the Conference membership to this topic.

This morning, Mr. Hassan of Egypt gave us a comprehensive account of the extensive work done in recent years in different multilateral arms control forums around the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space. This reminded me of the thematic discussion on that subject organized by the Conference two years ago. At that time, Ambassador de Aguiar Patriota of Brazil, Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, also gave a comprehensive briefing to the Conference. Both of these statements reflected the great importance attached by the international arms control community to the issue of outer space security. Moreover, the comprehensive, balanced, objective and impartial discussion of the different ideas and proposals proceeded in a rational, responsible and professional manner.

We endorse this kind of working atmosphere. The international community urgently needs to address the issue of outer space security as one of its most pressing matters in just such a working atmosphere. The statements made in today's meeting reflect a general agreement that, in the light of increasing space development and exploration activities, as well as advancing space science and technology and the broadening of their applications, space activities simultaneously contribute to the development and prosperity of human society while also posing increasing security challenges and risks. Nevertheless, there are a number of divergent views on how to effectively address the security challenges in outer space.

In his statement this morning, the United States Ambassador specifically referred to the fundamental flaws in the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space proposed by China and Russia in the Conference, and painted a picture of the Chinese threat to outer space. In response, I would just like to say that the fundamental flaw in the United States Ambassador's statement is that it makes not a single mention of the long-standing United States strategy of "outer space dominance". The flaw in the formulation of relevant United States policy is its refusal to commit to the non-weaponization of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space as the primary goals of maintaining outer space security.

In fact, the key factor contributing to the increasing tendency towards making a battleground of outer space is exactly the "outer space dominance" strategy pursued by the super-Powers with the most far-reaching space military strategies, space armament development plans and military space capabilities. It is just such countries that have openly defined outer space as a military or operational territory, continuously developed their

military capabilities in outer space, established outer space forces and space commands, increased their investment in research and development of space weapons and directed energy weapons, accelerated the deployment of weapons and equipment, and strengthened the military collaboration capabilities of their allies in outer space. These practices have intensified the trend of military expansion and preparedness in outer space, increased the risk of outer space becoming a battleground, and greatly increased the uncertainty of outer space security.

The strategies of outer space hegemony pursued by individual countries inevitably lead to an increase in outer space security vulnerabilities. The development of such capabilities as anti-missile systems and long-range and high-speed precision-strike weapons challenges traditional strategic balance and stability. The countries that conducted the earliest and most frequent anti-satellite tests, causing the most space debris, are constantly emphasizing the importance of outer space in missile defence, planning the development of space-based surveillance and anti-missile interception systems, and deploying upgraded anti-satellite systems that can jam or even interrupt an adversary's satellite communications, among other effects. All of these technological means have offensive military applications and pose a significant threat to the security of the outer space assets of all countries. Strategically, these countries emphasize the threat from competitors, while operationally testing offensive and defensive countermeasure technology, threatening the security of the outer space assets of other countries, intensifying the confrontational atmosphere in outer space and increasing the risk of military miscalculation and conflict. Is all this really just some blockbuster Hollywood movie that has nothing to do with the United States?

Mr. President, in response to the allegations, accusations and smears made by the United States against China, I would like to emphasize that China is not the United States and has no intention of formulating and implementing an "outer space dominance" strategy like that of the United States. The draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Deployment of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, which China and Russia jointly submitted to the Conference on Disarmament, has the non-deployment of weapons in outer space and the non-use of force against outer space objects as its core elements. This fully reflects China's commitment to the non-weaponization of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In the face of such a solemn initiative, any theory of a Chinese threat in outer space is feeble, futile and untenable.

For forty consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted, by overwhelming majorities, resolutions on preventing an arms race in outer space and calling for the negotiation of an outer space arms control treaty. The adoption by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, again by an overwhelming majority, of a resolution on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and establishing a Group of Governmental Experts on that topic clearly indicated the concern of the international community about the weaponization of outer space. Although the obstruction of the United States alone prevented that Group of Governmental Experts from adopting a substantive report, the parties nevertheless held unprecedented in-depth and substantive discussions on arms control in outer space and the elements of an international legal instrument to that end. These efforts have laid an important foundation for the next step in the process of advancing outer space arms control.

Mr. President, security in outer space entails issues in the two categories of safety and security. The first of these is exemplified by the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, with the attendant risk of strategic miscalculations and minor incidents leading to confrontations and even open conflict, which is the fundamental threat to outer space security. The second is embodied in the security risks that accompany the peaceful use of outer space, such as orbital congestion in space and the risks of collisions, space debris and the like, which are general risks run by all countries equally in developing their outer space activities. These two categories of security issues are not on the same level, and the paths for solving them should accordingly be different.

There can be no security whatsoever if an arms race in outer space cannot be prevented and the peaceful nature of outer space ensured. Drafting codes of responsible conduct, rules and principles, which are essentially transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space, has positive effects but is not legally binding and cannot plug the loopholes in current

international legal instruments on outer space. In consequence, it cannot substitute for the negotiation of a treaty on arms control in outer space. Given the complex nature of outer space security issues, a binary distinction between responsible and irresponsible behaviours in outer space is overly simplistic and subjective, and can too easily be reduced to a political tool.

China believes that, in order to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, insisting that the security order in outer space must be founded on international law and on the negotiation and conclusion of a legal instrument on arms control in outer space is the most meaningful and responsible action for maintaining outer space security. Discussions on responsible conduct in outer space should serve the fundamental goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. All related discussions should uphold multilateralism and avoid politicization, discrimination and exclusion.

First, it is necessary to establish a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable concept of global security, share the responsibility for maintaining outer space security, and seek to achieve common and universal security. The major Powers should abandon the unilateralist mindset of seeking absolute superiority, freedom and security in outer space, change their outer space monopolization strategies and policies, and rectify the misguided practice of placing the security of a single country or group above that of other countries. To defend the bottom line of no conflict, let alone war, in outer space, all parties should strengthen dialogue, enhance understanding and mutual trust, and avoid confrontation and miscalculation.

Second, it is necessary to respect and maintain the existing fundamental norms of international law. All countries should ensure that their conduct in outer space is consistent with international law and the basic norms of international relations; this is the most basic way to show responsibility. They should conscientiously uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, abide by the Outer Space Treaty, the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects and the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, and fulfil their obligations under international law in good faith.

Third, it is necessary to uphold the fundamental goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. The most urgent task before us is to negotiate and conclude a legally binding international treaty on outer space arms control as soon as possible.

The United Nations should again establish a group of governmental experts or an open-ended working group on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, for which responsible conduct in outer space could be a topic. Pending the conclusion of a programme of work in the Conference and the formal launch of negotiations, consideration could be given to establishing a group of technical experts to discuss in depth such technical issues as the definition, scope and verification of a future legal instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The Sino-Russian draft treaty can serve as an important basis for this work. I would like to stress once again that we have never imposed the draft treaty on anyone. It is an open initiative and all States members of the Conference are welcome to discuss it in depth and improve it together. A war in outer space cannot be fought, much less won. The historical lessons of the nuclear arms race cannot be repeated in outer space. Outer space should become a new frontier for mutually beneficial international cooperation, not a new battleground for competition and confrontation.

China stands ready to continue working with all parties to put into practice the concept of a community with a shared future for all humankind in the field of outer space, to actively explore pragmatic and effective ways and means to deal with threats to outer space security from the perspective of safeguarding the common security of all humanity and to make positive contributions to the maintenance of peace, security and sustainability in outer space.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Australia.

Ms. Hill (Australia): Mr. President, thank you for convening this meeting. I would like to join others in welcoming our new colleague, the Ambassador of Sweden. Australia

welcomes the opportunity to have the discussion today on this important topic and I would like to thank the panellists for providing some very useful context for our discussion.

Australia was pleased to co-sponsor General Assembly resolution 75/36 on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. This resolution has started an important new conversation on the security threats that nations face in space and on how we can work towards a common understanding of the role that responsible behaviours can play in mitigating the risks of miscalculation relating to behaviours of States in space and on earth.

Australia was also pleased to be one of the States that made a submission to the report of the Secretary-General under that resolution. We look forward to the release of the Secretary-General's report and we welcome the strong level of participation in the process to date. But this is only the first step and we urge all States to join this conversation as it develops.

Mr. President, I will now make some comments regarding the content of my country's submission to the Secretary-General. It is clear that threats or the perception of threats against space systems contribute to geopolitical instability and insecurity. It is thus vital to reduce those threats by articulating and maintaining responsible behaviours in relation to space systems. We believe that establishing a common understanding of what constitutes responsible and irresponsible behaviours will greatly assist in providing a framework to supplement existing international law and guidelines applicable to States in their access to and use of outer space. Such a framework could discourage irresponsible behaviours. Further, the development and implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours would also facilitate the certainty and stability necessary to encourage investment in and growth of the commercial space sector.

In our submission, we offered a view on how to characterize actions or activities in space as "responsible" or "irresponsible". Specifically, we offered the view that "responsible" covers actions or activities that are clearly communicated, avoid surprise, respect the safety and security of other actors and beneficiaries, contribute to stability or risk reduction and avoid provocation of tensions.

We offered the view that the term "irresponsible" covers any actions which do not meet the expectations of responsible behaviour or could, deliberately or inadvertently, create debris, require emergency manoeuvres to lower the risk of collision or otherwise threaten or interfere with the normal operation of space objects in peacetime.

In furtherance of the goals of resolution 75/36, Australia also offered for consideration a number of concrete principles of responsible behaviours that we think would contribute positively to space security and to the safety and sustainability of the space environment.

Firstly, we offered four key principles, namely: recognizing that international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, applies to the exploration and use of outer space and that all States should behave consistently with those international obligations; that States should sign and comply with obligations under the outer space treaties; that States should commit to not undertaking activities that deliberately or foreseeably create long-lived debris fields; and that States should commit to undertaking space activities with openness, transparency and predictability, respecting current and future opportunities for all humankind to benefit from the space domain.

Secondly, we offered three risk reduction principles, namely: that States agree rules on rendezvous and proximity operations to ensure that all relevant parties understand the parameters and objectives of those operations; that States establish notification, communication and information exchange protocols for when satellites are operating in proximity to each other; and that States establish shared understandings and practical implementation expectations concerning concepts articulated in the Outer Space Treaty, including "due regard", "harmful contamination" and "harmful interference".

Thirdly, we offered two transparency and confidence-building principles, namely: that States implement the conclusions of the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities; and that States agree explicit transparency and confidence-building measures, including in priority

risk minimization areas relating to information exchange, risk reduction notifications and coordination and consultation mechanisms.

Finally, we offered a principle for further progress, namely: that States should develop, on an evolving basis, a framework of norms, rules and principles of “responsible behaviours”, to reinforce those behaviours and to discourage and enable responses to “irresponsible behaviours”.

Mr. President, resolution 75/36 noted 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. The intent of the resolution is to seek to moderate actions, in order to enhance security and stability, not to legitimize the weaponization of space. This is an important point, as we need to manage the twin dilemmas of uncertain intent and the dual-use nature of many space objects, which cannot be achieved through prohibition measures alone. Finally, the resolution noted that further work on responsible behaviours might, as appropriate and without prejudice, contribute to further consideration of legally binding instruments in this area. Australia is open to considering legally binding instruments, provided they address the full complexity of space threats.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, let me welcome the new Swedish Ambassador and wish her success in her endeavours here in Geneva. I would also like to thank the invited speakers for their interesting and informative presentations.

The topic of today’s meeting deserves special attention, perhaps no less and possibly much more than nuclear disarmament. There are a number of well-known reasons for this. The main one is that, with every passing year, the sustainable development and prosperity, both of individual countries and regions and of humanity as a whole, depend more and more on the exploitation of space and the use of space technologies. We are seeing with our own eyes how outer space is turning from an object of scientific knowledge into a valuable resource, and space activity is becoming a source of competitive advantage and economic growth.

Another reason lies in the need to foresee the negative and even catastrophic consequences of the improper use of near-Earth space, in other words, use that conflicts with the norms and principles of current international space law.

In this regard, it is wholly justified to consider factors that either already increase or in the very near future will provoke an increase in the likelihood of the appearance and manifestation of such consequences. Some of them, such as the increase in the volume of space debris or the intensity of space activity, have already become the subject of expert analysis and are being comprehensively discussed at various specialized sites. Others, on which I will dwell in more detail, still require reflection by the international community.

Among the former, I would single out the increasingly noticeable desire of individual States and groups of States for unconditional and undivided domination in space, in the expectation of obtaining a number of, so to speak, advantages, including, first, the ability to build their space policy and carry out space activities without regard to international space law; secondly, the privilege of ignoring the opinions, positions and interests of other participants in space activities; thirdly, a right to impose on other States their national or group approaches to the implementation of space activities and their international regulation; and fourthly, the right to be guided by their own unilateral understanding of ways and means of ensuring the safety and long-term sustainability of space activities. This list is not exhaustive.

To guarantee a dominant position, these States can use various economic, political and diplomatic instruments and, ultimately, brute force. Among others, the following approaches deserve to be mentioned as a priority: raising artificial barriers to the development of international cooperation in space, while simultaneously creating favourable and exceptional conditions for the implementation of such cooperation for themselves and their

allies; imposing unilateral sanctions in order to curb the emergence of technologically competitive participants in space activities; forming closed “special-interest clubs” that would promote unilateral approaches to the international regulation of space activities that are beneficial only to their members; discrediting responsible participants in space activities through low-grade propaganda and categorical rejection of their initiatives to ensure the safety of space activities; and distracting the international community from problems that undermine the fundamental principles of the peaceful use and exploration of outer space. One example of the latter is the excessive emphasis on the specific issue of “space debris”, making it the cornerstone of solving the problem of improving the safety of outer space activities and linking it artificially with the problem of preventing an arms race in outer space. And the last thing I would like to mention is the adoption of doctrinal guidelines and documents that provide for the possibility of using force, including on preventive grounds, to ensure the safety of national space operations and orbital property.

Distinguished colleagues, it is self-explanatory that a space policy aimed at domination in space is contrary to the norms and principles of international space law and cannot therefore be justified from the point of view of the nature and goals of space activities, which have been repeatedly declared and enshrined in United Nations documents and international agreements on outer space.

At the same time, it is a sad fact that, in recent years, we have witnessed the manifestation of elements of just such a policy in individual States. Strengthening this trend is unlikely to contribute to the security, sustainability and predictability of space activities, equal access to space for all interested countries, obtaining maximum benefits from the use of space technologies, the development of equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation in the space field, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space and its transformation into yet another area of confrontation and armed conflict.

Another factor that increases the likelihood of the negative consequences of inappropriate space activities is the recent gradual departure from the understanding of outer space as an environment destined exclusively for peaceful exploration and the development of conflict-free multilateral cooperation that contributes to the strengthening of international security. The results of such cooperation should become the property of all humankind. This is the approach to outer space laid down in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967.

At the instigation of some States, the dangerous concept of the conflict-generating nature of outer space, interpreted as a potential and even a wholly real arena of hostilities, is being introduced into diplomatic circulation. At the same time, for some reason, people are overlooking the fact that such a feature of space is not an objective characteristic but stems from a space policy pursued by States that is primarily aimed at absolute domination.

It is a matter of concern that this interpretation, which is presented as a common understanding of outer space, has already been taken up not only by a number of States but also by representatives of the United Nations: it has begun to appear more and more frequently in their statements.

As a responsible participant in space activities for many years and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council with special obligations to maintain and strengthen international security, Russia can neither agree with such an interpretation of outer space nor justify attempts to impose it on the international community.

Moreover, we see a real danger that consolidating such an understanding of outer space may open the floodgates for placing weapons in space. After all, if we all agree that outer space is a potential arena for conflicts and hostilities, then it would be quite logical for States to think about creating a combat capability in space. However, as we know, a number of countries are already planning to equip themselves with such a capability and place it in near-Earth orbit in the foreseeable future.

The consequences of such an irresponsible and reckless step are easily predictable. A growth in tension and mistrust, and the further undermining of strategic stability, are just a few, and far from the most pernicious, of them.

What should be done to neutralize the impact of the factors that I have mentioned? The answer to this question lies primarily in the legal plane. We are talking about the

development and adoption of new legally binding instruments for the regulation of space activities, aimed at eliminating existing legal gaps and keeping outer space free of weapons of any kind.

Institutionally, we have everything we need for such work: the required intellectual potential in the form of national and international expertise; the negotiating base in the Conference on Disarmament; and, I would go so far as to say, serious fundamental developments in the form of documents from specialized groups of government experts under the United Nations and the Russian-Chinese Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space. There is also a normative basis for such work, the main element of which remains the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. In order to begin substantive, constructive, result-oriented negotiation work, only one essential element is lacking – the political will of all interested States.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to a very revealing phenomenon. Since 2008, when the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space was presented for the first time, its opponents have not been able to generate any viable initiative like the Russian-Chinese one. For more than 10 years, we have heard only weakly reasoned and highly politicized criticism, and we have seen a demonstrative rejection of both the draft Treaty and the international initiative on no first placement of weapons in outer space. It seems that this clearly indicates the unwillingness of our opponents to actually solve the problem of preventing an arms race in outer space.

We remain convinced that there is no alternative comparable in its reliability for eliminating problems and threats in space other than the conclusion of legally binding agreements. Nevertheless, we are open to discussing any initiatives that can make a significant contribution to solving the problem of preventing an arms race in outer space. This also applies to continuation of the dialogue on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, and a new initiative to develop rules for “responsible behaviour in outer space”. At the same time, we are convinced that transparency and confidence-building measures and rules of conduct in outer space cannot be considered a full-fledged substitute for legally binding agreements, but will be implemented only as a supplement to such agreements.

I would like to note that Russia has made its proposals in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 75/36 and will be ready for a thorough exchange of views on the Secretary-General’s related report.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished colleagues, in conclusion I would like to emphasize that the way to solve problems in space, as well as on earth, lies through the unification of our efforts, not through disunity; through constant constructive and equal dialogue, not through refusal to discuss problems; through respect and a desire to understand and take into account the position and interests of a partner, not through baseless, politicized and sometimes aggressive statements; and by searching for solutions acceptable to all stakeholders, rather than imposing national and narrow group views, assessments and concepts on the international community.

It is on the basis of this approach that Russia is ready to interact with other States on space issues.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Soualem of Algeria.

Mr. Soualem (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Algerian delegation on the assumption of the role of President of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of our full support as you carry out your duties. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor and the other Presidents of this session. I would like to thank you for organizing today’s thematic discussion on the important topic of prevention of an arms race in outer space, a core issue on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to express our appreciation for the excellent presentations made by the experts this morning.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of 21 and would like to contribute the following to the discussions. The debate on the prevention

of an arms race in outer space echoes the vision set out in paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, according to which 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.

Algeria shares the concerns over the growing threat of an arms race in outer space and its consequences for international peace and security and our daily lives, in many economic, social and scientific areas. The prevention of such a race makes it imperative for all States to accept their responsibility to refrain from activities that could jeopardize the collective goal of preserving outer space free from weapons of mass destruction and all other forms of weaponization so as to ensure that its benefits are available to all. The increasing use of space requires greater transparency and more ambitious confidence-building measures. Accordingly, all States with major space capabilities have a special responsibility to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and to refrain from acting in a manner that is incompatible with this objective and with the rules and principles of international law, in the interests of maintaining peace and security in the world and fostering international cooperation.

It is clear that, as global commons, space and celestial bodies must be used, explored and utilized in a spirit of cooperation for the benefit and in the interests of all humankind and all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development. In view of this, we need to work towards promoting full access to outer space technology through cooperation, technical assistance and related capacity-building in developing countries. Algeria reaffirms its support for efforts to reinforce the outer space legal regime as part of a collective commitment to building a community of shared future for human beings and the goal of averting a grave danger for international peace and security.

My country recognizes the value of transparency and confidence-building measures, including a code of conduct, in promoting trust among States. Such voluntary measures cannot fill the gaps in the current international legal framework, which is inadequate for preventing an arms race in outer space. They cannot be a substitute for a legally binding treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Algeria reaffirms that the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, plays a primary role and should start negotiations on an international instrument dealing with matters related to its agenda item on the prevention of an arms race in outer space without delay.

As mentioned in the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the establishment of an ad hoc body under the auspices of the Conference on Disarmament to conduct negotiations on a multilateral instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space is the most appropriate means of doing this. More recently, this call was repeated in General Assembly resolution 74/35, adopted in December 2020, which invites the Conference on Disarmament to establish a working group under its agenda item entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space” as early as possible, while taking note of the benefits of confidence- and security-building measures and the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, proposed by the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation, which serve as a solid basis for negotiation.

As part of its full commitment to contribute to efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space, my country participated in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space mandated by the General Assembly. The importance and special interest that we all attach to this issue are underscored in resolutions recently adopted by the General Assembly, namely resolution 75/35 on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, resolution 75/37 on no first placement of weapons in outer space and further practical steps to prevent an arms race in outer space, 75/69 on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, and 75/36 on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.

Mr. President, my country’s commitment to the prevention of such an arms race is well reflected in its support for these resolutions. Algeria is aware of the importance and

urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space and stands ready to contribute to the achievement of that goal. We will spare no effort in that regard.

The President: I thank Ambassador Soualem of Algeria. The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lim Sang-beon (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, my delegation welcomes this thematic discussion under item 3, prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is a good opportunity to identify common ground on key issues to be faced. I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to the panellists today for their informative presentations and offer a warm welcome to the Ambassador of Sweden.

Mr. President, we are living in a new space world where technology is rapidly advancing and the number of actors in both the public and the private sectors is increasing. It is therefore evident that the space threat and risk is caused by more congested, contested and competitive space activities increasing at an unprecedented pace. Ensuring a safe, secure and sustainable space environment has emerged as a common interest embraced by all humankind.

Now allow me to reiterate our viewpoint on today's topic. As a spacefaring nation, the Republic of Korea is firmly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In this regard, we welcome the efforts made through the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space in 2018 and 2019. We believe the Group made a valuable contribution to deepening the common understanding across varying views and approaches on key issues. As pointed out, given the characteristics and cross-cutting nature of space technology, it is not easy for States to be certain about the intention behind outer space activities which could lead to the escalation of tensions and even contribute to the arms race. Because of that and the limited verification capabilities, combined with a lack of transparency, certain actions or activities in space could constitute a threat, or could be perceived as a threat, to others. We therefore believe that lingering mistrust and lack of communication between different participants with different perspectives should be addressed as a priority task on the path to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

In this regard, General Assembly resolution 75/36, which was tabled by the United Kingdom and adopted by an overwhelming majority last year, allowed us to subscribe to reducing the space threat through the norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. The Republic of Korea fully aligns itself with the resolution and we also believe that our collective efforts towards defining threats and responsible behaviours will serve as meaningful stepping stones towards the creation of a legally binding norm in the area of space security.

We submitted our national views on "responsible" and "irresponsible" behaviours and we look forward to the Secretary-General's consolidated report, to be submitted at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, as requested in the above-mentioned resolution. We hope more States will join as well.

Lastly, we strongly believe that peaceful uses of the outer space should be accompanied by trust and confidence from the international community.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Rosales (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Kenya on behalf of the Group of 21. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Salomon Eheth, of our sister Republic of Cameroon, on his assumption of the presidency of this important Conference on Disarmament. We certainly wish you every success and offer you our support. We appreciate the organization of this thematic session dedicated to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and welcome the way in which Cameroon has planned its presidency in accordance with the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament and in full conformity with the rules of procedure. We also thank Ambassador Bassem Hassan, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations in New York, Ms. Natália Archinard of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Mr. Michael

Spies of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and Ms. Laetitia Zarkan of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for their presentations.

We commend, in particular, the decision of the African Union to move forward in strengthening its outer space strategy and its decision to accept the offer of Egypt to host the African Union Space Agency. This is an unparalleled step forward that sets an example for the community of nations. We trust that the African Union will know how to use the potential of this initiative, in line with international regulations on the exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of States' development.

We also commend the African Union's readiness to cooperate with the League of Arab States in this matter and welcome the forthcoming African-Arab summit, to be held in Saudi Arabia in 2022. We are confident that the summit will help strengthen the development of the countries in the Region for the benefit of overall disarmament.

Mr. President, Venezuela is of the view that outer space should be explored and used exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all countries, regardless of their degree of economic or scientific development and without compromising the security of any State. We regret that the scientific and technological progress made in the exploration and use of outer space may be harnessed for the unilateral deployment of national missile defence systems or other military systems that could trigger an arms race, especially if we bear in mind that the current legal regime provides no adequate protection from the militarization of outer space and, consequently, needs to be strengthened.

My delegation has followed with interest the recent and expansive increase in the number of initiatives focussed on the exploration and use of outer space, and we condemn the decision of some States to enlist in space warfare by establishing units of armed forces in space. This behaviour will merely accelerate the establishment of a destructive system of warfare in outer space. If we consider outer space to be the common heritage of humankind, countries with technological space capabilities should refrain from fielding any defensive or offensive military systems in outer space and establish verification, transparency and confidence-building mechanisms.

We therefore call on the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom to disband their so-called "space forces" and "space commands" without delay and to destroy all related weapons technology. Such initiatives only feed the trend towards an arms race in outer space, heightening the risk of a new rule of war and creating greater uncertainty about space security and the future of humankind. This is further exacerbated by the exponential development of anti-satellite technology, ultra-long-range missile defence systems and ancillary artificial intelligence technology. For the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, it is clear that these matters require the adoption of binding regulations as soon as possible in order to ensure responsible behaviour on the part of those countries that possess such technology.

We stress the need for the Conference on Disarmament to pursue this issue more actively, effectively discharging its mandate in this regard.

Mr. President, Venezuela supports the proposals of the People's Republic of China with regard to the need to promote and ensure responsible behaviour in outer space based on a commitment to non-discriminatory, non-politicized and inclusive multilateralism. The draft treaty drawn up by the Russian Federation and China on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space is an important step in that direction and should be considered in the Conference as a matter of priority. In this regard, my country would like to recall the final document of the eighteenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2019, in which countries: "recognized the common interest of all humankind and the inalienable, legitimate, sovereign rights of all States in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes, and reconfirmed their stand to oppose and reject any act denying or violating it and emphasized that prevention of an arms race in outer space, including a ban to deploy or use weapons therein, would avert a grave danger for international peace and security".

In September 2015, my Government and the Government of the Russian Federation signed a joint statement in which they pledge not to be the first to deploy any type of weapons

in outer space and to do their utmost to prevent the transformation of outer space into an arena of confrontation.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, by commending you on your dedication and your transparency, and convey our delegation's interest in participating actively in the forthcoming thematic sessions you have organized on negative security assurances and new types of weapons.

The President: I thank the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Reda Elsayed (Egypt): Mr. President, as this is the first time our delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on assuming this very important role during such difficult times. I would like to thank you for organizing this week's plenary discussion on the topic of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, a subject matter that Egypt considers one of the top priorities of the international security architecture and of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to extend my thanks to the distinguished panellists for the very insightful and thoughtful working presentations.

Mr. President, my delegation fully associates itself with the statement of the Group of 21 as delivered by the delegation of Kenya. We believe that there is a clear need for a legally binding instrument that would complement the existing international framework by preventing an arms race in outer space and filling the existing legal gaps in this area, especially given the alarming announcements made by some States in relation to plans to weaponize outer space, in addition to the continued development of military capabilities devoted to attacking outer space assets.

Such a legally binding instrument should have a comprehensive scope that includes a prohibition on the placement of any weapons, defensive or offensive, in outer space, on armed attacks against satellites or any outer space assets, on any intended harmful interference that would interrupt the normal functioning of outer space assets and on the development, testing and stockpiling of weapons that are specifically designed for the sole purpose of attacking outer space assets, or being deployed or used as weapons in outer space. We believe that each of these prohibitions can be subject to reliable verification, using a diversified set of tools that could be supplemented by transparency measures or mechanisms for consultations and discreet settlement. We also believe that such instruments can be designed to avoid any infringement on the full enjoyment of the peaceful uses of outer space or dual-use technologies by all States, for purposes other than weaponization. The required definitions can be determined in a manner that would avoid any such contravention.

The existing legal framework, especially the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, presents a good basis. Nevertheless, there is a clear need for serious efforts to reach new legally binding instruments that would complement the existing legal framework, considering the relevant significant technological developments and the need for assurances that outer space would remain free of armed conflicts or arm races.

Mr. President, for years, Egypt has alternated with Sri Lanka in submitting the annual resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space to the General Assembly. The resolution invites the Conference on Disarmament to establish a working group on this agenda item as soon as possible. My country's commitment to the advancement of this topic is unwavering. It is clearly demonstrated in our participation in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 72/250.

More recently Egypt voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 75/36, entitled "reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours", on the understanding that the resolution represents a step in the right direction towards the development of rules that could pave the way to the necessary and legally binding instruments needed to address threats to space systems from a comprehensive point of view that covers terrestrial and space-based threats to space systems.

Mr. President, Egypt appreciates other important contributions that aim to make progress on this matter, namely the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, which was presented to the Conference on Disarmament. It is also worth

mentioning that Egypt is a sponsor of three of the five resolutions on to the question of space security at the First Committee of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, Egypt reiterates its support for adopting a holistic approach that utilizes the complementarity of all the previous efforts that could lead us to developing agreed binding rules within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. We sincerely hope that the polarization of this issue will come to an end.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of India. I give the floor to Ambassador Pankaj Sharma.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, thank you for organizing this thematic discussion on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the Conference on Disarmament, where it has been on the agenda since 1982. I would like to join you and other colleagues in welcoming Ambassador Anna Jardfelt of Sweden as the newest member of the Conference on Disarmament family and I look forward to working with her.

India aligns itself with the G21 statement delivered by the distinguished coordinator from Kenya. I thank our distinguished panellists for their excellent presentations earlier today.

Mr. President, India is a major spacefaring nation and I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its position on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. India remains opposed to the weaponization of outer space. India has not, and will not, resort to any arms race in outer space. We remain committed to maintaining outer space as an ever-expanding frontier for cooperative endeavours of all spacefaring nations. It is incumbent on all spacefaring nations and others to help to safeguard outer space as the common heritage of humankind and to preserve and promote the benefits flowing from space technology and its applications for all.

India continues to support substantive consideration of the prevention of an arms race in outer space within the multilateral framework of the United Nations. We remain committed to the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space here in the Conference on Disarmament. India has maintained that, while universal and non-discriminatory transparency and confidence-building measures can play a useful complementary role, they cannot be a substitute for legally binding instruments in this field.

Similarly, India has underlined the need for consideration of the prevention of an arms race in outer space based on objective and concrete criteria and concepts, rather than subjective beliefs and perceptions. India was an active participant in the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, which concluded its session in March 2019. India also participated in the deliberation on transparency and confidence-building measures held during the informal meeting of the Disarmament Commission in April 2019.

At the seventy-fifth session of the First Committee last year, India voted in favour of four out of five resolutions submitted under the outer space cluster, namely, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which we also co-sponsored; on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space; on no first placement of weapons in outer space; and on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

Mr. President, India looks forward to an early start of negotiations of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, to address pressing issues relating to space security, and remains committed to playing a leading and constructive role together with other partners in this regard.

The President: The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Gabriëlse of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on assuming the presidency and thank you for continuing on the established track of holding thematic debates in the Conference on Disarmament, with our focus today on agenda item 3, the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Let me also thank the panellists for their comprehensive introduction and welcome our Swedish colleague to the Conference on Disarmament for the first time.

Mr. President, space concerns all of us. Space and space technology are, by definition, international matters. No country can operate in outer space without affecting others. Moreover, the use of space assets is no longer the prerogative of major Powers. The use of space technology applications is not even limited to countries that have their own satellites. By procuring satellite-related services, a large number of United Nations Member States now have access to the many possibilities offered by space technology applications, ranging from agriculture to disaster response. This provides Member States with opportunities for further socioeconomic development.

At the same time, outer space is under increasing pressure in respect of technological and geological development and geopolitical development. The consequences of failure of space technology applications are greater than ever and could lead to major disruptions in economic, social and security terms. Satellites that transmit positioning and timing data are part of critical infrastructure and we can no longer imagine our smart world without reliable weather forecasts, digital payments, track and trace systems or logistics. The Netherlands also recognizes the importance of space for military operations within the applicable existing international frameworks. Such military activities include communication with deployed units, the use of satellite-guided precision munitions and intelligence analysis based on satellite imagery.

Mr. President, the international community has a collective responsibility with regard to space. As a State party to the five United Nations treaties on outer space, the Netherlands takes the view that the use of outer space should be peaceful and, in particular, that no weapons of mass destruction should be placed in orbit around Earth or any other celestial body. The Netherlands continues to endeavour to prevent an arms race in outer space and fully supports the work of the Conference on Disarmament in this field.

In our efforts, the Netherlands connects the subject of space security to risk reduction measures and increasing strategic stability among the great Powers. We welcome the fact that a fair number of United Nations Member States and other entities responded to the request pursuant to the broadly supported General Assembly resolution 75/36 and provided their views for inclusion in the report of the Secretary-General. We believe that transforming those views into a joint vision on this subject is a useful and necessary starting point for an international dialogue on the establishment of norms of responsible behaviour, in an effort to reduce the vulnerability of space and achieve an inclusive process. That is why the Netherlands voted in favour of resolution 75/36. It is also why the Netherlands submitted a contribution in its national capacity, in addition to aligning itself with the contribution submitted by the European Union. In regard to the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 75/36, my delegation is of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should play an important role.

Mr. President, we believe that the international discussions on outer space here in Geneva, as well as in Vienna and New York, can result in constructive and concrete steps that will encourage United Nations Member States, spacefaring or not, to realize a sustainable, safe and secure space domain. Maintaining that sustainability, safety and security in space by means of dialogue and cooperation is to the benefit of everyone on Earth. The Netherlands is committed to contributing to this joint effort.

The President: Distinguished colleagues, I have several speakers remaining on my list and so it seems that we will not be able to conclude the discussion this afternoon. I therefore propose that we adjourn our meeting and return to this list during the plenary meeting on Tuesday, 3 June. This meeting is therefore adjourned.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.