Mr. Chairman,

The global community, both space-faring and non-space-faring nations, draws ever-increasing benefits from space assets. These benefits range from communications to search and rescue to navigation and weather forecasting capabilities unimaginable to previous generations. Many would be shocked to discover the extent of the impact upon our daily lives if there were ever a large-scale interruption in satellite services. Space assets also play an important role in sustaining strategic stability. It would not be an exaggeration to say that all nations have a stake in protecting space assets and the benefits they provide.

In this light, Canada believes strongly that all nations also share a stake and a responsibility in ensuring that human actions do not jeopardize the current and future benefits offered to us by outer space. This is the common starting point from which Member States have built their endeavours in outer space, and a point from which we should not sway.

Canada has long advocated a ban on space-based weapons as a means to fulfilling a greater end, namely, that of ensuring secure and sustainable access to and use of space for peaceful purposes. Space, and the benefits it provides across a wide range of sectors, represents an increasingly valuable resource that is too precious to leave unprotected by a universally respected international law. At the General Assembly in 2004, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin stated, “What a tragedy it would be if space became one big weapons arsenal and the scene of a new arms race. In 1967, the United Nations agreed that weapons of mass destruction must not be based in space. The time has come to extend this ban to all weapons.” A legal instrument to give effect to such a comprehensive ban should be negotiated without delay.

A space weapons ban has of course long been the subject of discussion in the Conference on Disarmament and Canada is committed to seeing the CD re-establish an Ad Hoc Committee to consider the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Canada thinks it is time for the international community to organize itself to ensure substantive multilateral consideration of this and other measures that could be taken to enhance outer space security. Progress in this regard will be facilitated by discussions which have already taken place. Among the specific and detailed elements of a space weapons ban that have been explored here in the First Committee, in the Conference on Disarmament and elsewhere are such topics as definitions, transparency, entry-into-force and verification.

At the same time, Canada appreciates that measures other than a weaponization ban can also enhance space security, and that the broad range of elements included in a space security concept can be addressed in many different fora. States might usefully, for example, wish to explore various approaches to confidence-building in this area. Constructive ideas that have been advanced include proposals for no first deployment pledges, codes of conduct for space activity
and expanded commitments of non-interference with space-based national technical means (building on existing provisions found in accords such as the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty). Such ideas seem to us worth considering. Proposals of this kind can also serve to foster a politico-diplomatic environment of mutual confidence, one conducive to the negotiation of a multilateral agreement on PAROS, which to be effective, would require support from key space-faring nations, and especially those with a space launch capability.

Concrete steps have already been taken. Last October, Russia was the first country to pledge that it would not be the first to deploy weapons of any kind in space. A no first deployment pledge has since also been made by the participants in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. If adopted widely, such declarations could help build confidence that no nation will station weapons in space. The Hague Code of Conduct also makes an important contribution to confidence building as its 122 subscribers agree to inform each other of space launches through pre-launch notifications. Another step available to all states is to accede to the Outer Space Treaty, and Canada encourages all those that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty before its 40th anniversary in 2007.

Canada would welcome the opportunity to share ideas and learn from others on how we as nations and members of the international community can best ensure that space remains free for peaceful use in future. On a national basis, there are many different ways to reinforce space security through the protection of space assets. For example, better protecting ground stations, introducing redundancy within satellite systems, and building a replenishment capacity could all contribute in this regard.

Canada would encourage enhanced cooperation between UN bodies, from a dialogue between the First and Fourth Committees on their space-related work, to exchanges between the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Conference on Disarmament. Working more closely together would highlight a commonality of interests and the need for practical steps to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

We have a duty to ourselves – and to future generations – to ensure secure and sustainable access to and use of space for peaceful purposes. With recent technological developments, the possibility that space weapons could be deployed looms ever closer. And so, now, we can gain much by investing our energies in ensuring space security through developing a comprehensive multilateral architecture for a weapons-free outer space. In this way, we will be able to ensure that future generations are able, as we are today, to invest their energies not in the development and deployment of space-based weapons, but rather in exploring and using outer space for peaceful purposes, for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and of all humankind.

We share these views in a spirit of cooperation and look forward to hearing the views of others.

Thank you.