EXPLANATION OF VOTE

Draft Resolution L.44: General and complete disarmament: transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities

Mr. Chairman,

Although the U.S. delegation voted against this resolution, our vote in no way detracts from our long-standing support for voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) for outer space activities. We have repeatedly noted in multilateral fora that some new TCBMs, implemented on a voluntary basis, have the potential to enhance satellite safety and reduce uncertainty in an evolving space environment.

In this regard, the United States has pursued international cooperation with other spacefaring nations on “best practice guidelines” to, for example, mitigate orbital debris. The United States also supports a set of voluntary TCBMs that focus upon a pragmatic and incremental approach to space safety and security.

However, our support for such “best practice guidelines” and voluntary transparency and confidence building measures ends when such efforts are tied to proposals for legally-binding space arms control constraints and limitations.

The United States voted “no” because it believes the resolution makes an unacceptable linkage between proposals for voluntary pragmatic TCBMs and the commencement of futile negotiations on unnecessary and unverifiable space arms control agreements. In particular, we note the resolution’s reference to Russia’s and China’s draft treaty proposal introduced this year at the Conference on Disarmament, which the United State opposes. Our critique of their space arms control treaty is in CD/1847.

Despite this disappointment, the United States will seek to continue to pursue opportunities to establish bilateral space security dialogues with Russia, China, and other spacefaring nations. We also will continue to support substantive discussions on space TCBMs at the Conference on Disarmament and other appropriate multilateral fora.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.