Explanation of Vote delivered by Italy

I am taking the floor for explaining the vote on the proposal contained in document A/C.1/69/L.14 regarding "No first Placement of Weapons in Outer Space".

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, as well as Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Iceland and Norway. We will abstain on L.14.

- We have a longstanding position in favour of the preservation of a safe and secure space environment and peaceful uses of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. Strengthening the safety, security, and long-term sustainability of activities in outer space is of common interest and a key priority for us, it contributes to the development and security of States.

- We believe it is important to develop initiatives to ensure confidence and mutual trust between current and future space actors. We are convinced that Transparency and Confidence Building Measures can make a contribution to the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space, and encourages States to support initiatives to this end, such as the EU proposal for an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities.

- We remain committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Therefore, EU Member States voted in favour of UNGA Resolution 68/29 regarding the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS). However, we are concerned that “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space” (NFP) does not adequately respond to the objective of strengthening trust and confidence between states.

- We are concerned with the ambiguity of the very idea of "not to be the first to place", which may entice States to prepare to be second or third. We therefore, assess that it could be interpreted as implicitly encouraging States to pre-emptively develop offensive space capabilities, in order to be able to react to the placement by another State of a weapon in space by placing in turn a weapon in space.

- Moreover, this initiative does not address the difficult issue of defining what a weapon in outer space is, which could easily lead a State to mistakenly assess that another State has placed weapons in outer space. Without a common understanding of what constitutes a weapon in space, a State could inadvertently put an object in space that another State considers to be a weapon. For example, a number of existing satellites are capable of performing orbital manoeuvres. These satellites could be construed as being space weapons, as they could also have the capability to be manoeuvred into other satellites.

- We remain concerned of the continued development of all anti-satellite weapons and capabilities, including terrestrially based, and underline the importance of addressing such developments promptly and as part of international efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

- We therefore assess that introducing a NFP pledge in this environment could lead to misperceptions and misunderstandings. It could potentially have the opposite effect of the declared intention, namely to contribute to strengthening international peace and security and prevent an arms race in outer space.

- We believe it is more useful to address the behaviour in, and use of, outer space to further discussions and initiatives on how to prevent space from becoming an arena for conflict and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the space environment.

- We would like to stress that for us, for the reasons we have just outlined, the updated draft on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT) as submitted by China and the Russian Federation does not represent the basis for substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament on PAROS.
Finally, we would like to recall that we set out our priorities for work at the Conference on Disarmament in EU statements during this First Committee earlier this month.