Statement

by

Mr. Yasar Ammar, Third Secretary

Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations

at the

First Committee Thematic Debate on Outer Space

(Disarmament Aspects)

(69th Session of the UNGA)

New York, 27 October 2014
Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan delegation aligns itself with the NAM statement made under this cluster.

In recent years, space is no longer considered an exclusive preserve of a few developed states. Today developing countries are tapping into space technology in diverse areas ranging from meteorology and disaster management to economy and telecommunications. Their reliance on space technology will only grow further in the years to come.

Our endeavours for over three decades in the SSOD-I, the CD and the GA have focused on one key objective i.e. ensuring that outer space stays clear of arms and weaponization. It is time to reaffirm the commitment which has led us thus far towards realization of this objective.

If history is any guide, monopolies of the few cannot last for too long. It is therefore an urgent imperative for the international community to prevent the possibility of weaponizing outer space. Further delay will be counter-productive. Let us avoid the mistakes made in the case of chemical weapons which witnessed decades of production before the CWC was concluded.

The Final document of SSOD-I contains more than 30 paragraphs that relate to the dangers, and urgency of preventing arms race in its various aspects. Paragraph 80 of this document specifically recommended undertaking appropriate international negotiations on prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The CD has long been seized of this issue. And the General Assembly has recognized, for over two decades, that prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger to international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

The development and deployment of ABM systems and their integration into space assets has added a worrying dimension to the issues relating to outer space. An arms race in and weaponization of outer space would not only endanger the peaceful uses of outer space but also aggravate the intensity of conflicts on earth, with potentially disastrous consequences for international peace and security. Therefore, it is essential to redouble efforts in evolving a comprehensive, universal and non-discriminatory agreement that addresses concerns arising from the development, deployment and proliferation of ABM systems.

Mr. Chairman,

The rapid growth and change in space technologies has widened gaps in the existing international regime pertaining to Outer Space, including the Outer Space
Treaty of 1967 and the Moon Treaty of 1984, which necessitates conclusion of a legally binding treaty to fill these gaps.

It is against this backdrop that Pakistan has consistently opposed weaponization of outer space and called for negotiations in the CD on this contemporary issue of interest and concern.

There is a considerable body of existing knowledge on PAROS. Much work has already been done in the CD by the Ad-Hoc Committees on this subject from 1985 to 1992. Moreover, the draft text, tabled jointly by Russian Federation and China in 2008, commonly known as PPWT, and the revised draft of the PPWT introduced by Russian Federation and China in the Conference on Disarmament on 10th June 2014 also provide a useful basis to commence negotiations. We, therefore, see no impediment in starting negotiations on PAROS in the CD.

Pakistan, along with a number of other states, has co-sponsored the Russian resolution entitled, “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space” (A/C.1/69/L.14). This is a clear reflection of the importance we ascribe to this issue. The resolution urges an early start of substantive work at the CD. We have been making similar calls at different occasions being cognizant of the importance of the issue. We are also co-sponsoring the resolution entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space” (A/C.1/69/L.3) being tabled by Egypt.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the growing dangers of weaponization in outer space and its attendant repercussions for international peace and security, some states continue to oppose commencement of negotiations on this issue in the CD. There can be no other explanation for such opposition except that these States seek to protect their monopoly on this technology and maintain their “full spectrum dominance”.

On the other hand, there has been a growing lament expressed over the CD’s deadlock in the past four years. Some States have found it convenient to attribute this stalemate to one of the four core issues on the CD’s agenda. Facts speak for themselves. And one inconvenient fact is that the CD, despite overwhelming support for negotiating a legal instrument on PAROS, has been prevented by a handful states from doing so.

The international community must therefore ask for a clear expression of the underlying reasons due to which these states oppose negotiations on PAROS. These states should acknowledge their responsibility in perpetuating the CD’s deadlock on this issue.
Mr. Chairman,

We note that efforts are underway to conclude a Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities. We have been participating actively in the open ended consultations of International Code of Conduct (ICoC) for Outer Space Activities. While we see value in such efforts, we also believe that such initiatives should be pursued in an inclusive, universal and participatory manner, taking into account the security interests of all States.

We also take note of the report and recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space. We agree that transparency and CBMs should be implemented to the greatest extent practicable and in a manner that is consistent with states’ national interests.

While these proposals and initiative can be useful interim steps, they cannot and should not obviate the quest for a legally binding treaty on PAROS in the CD. Notwithstanding the usefulness of the interim steps, the only way to secure a weapon-free outer space is a legally binding treaty on PAROS in the CD.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.