Statement

by

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on possible challenges to space security and sustainability

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Let me welcome the convening of the first ever joint meeting of the First and the Fourth Committees and congratulate you for chairing it. The diverse benefits and complex challenges connected with human activity in outer space merit the bringing together today of these two committees.

The first joint meeting of the First and Fourth Committees takes place in the same year that our leaders met to agree the visionary and transformative 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, Space technologies will be essential for addressing many of the challenges that will need to be overcome in order to deliver this rightly ambitious agenda.

Space is a driver for economic growth and innovations for the benefits of all people. Space activities and technologies contribute to tackling major challenges such as climate change, disaster management, health and the protection of the environment and of scarce resources. They are important in conflict prevention and management, as well as the protection of human rights. They also boost the competitiveness of industry well beyond the space sector, thereby contributing to job creation and socio-economic development in almost all economic areas worldwide.

In the EU, we have developed strong and unique space capabilities allowing us to take part in major space endeavours. Key priorities for European Space Policy lie in the area of global navigation and earth observation with flagship programmes, Galileo and Copernicus, as well as in space research.

Today, the space environment faces significant challenges, stemming from the proliferation of dangerous orbital debris which increases the likelihood of destructive collisions, the crowding of satellites, the growing saturation of the radio-frequency spectrum, as well as the threat of deliberate disruption or destruction of satellites. These challenges call for the serious and timely involvement of states to ensure greater safety, security and sustainability in outer space. The EU therefore attaches great importance to the development and implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures as a means of strengthening security and ensuring sustainability in the peaceful use of outer space. This is why we have proposed a non-legally binding International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities.

The meeting convened at the UN Headquarters in New York on 27-31 July 2015 at the initiative of the EU with the assistance of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs entitled

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
“Multilateral Negotiations on an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities” was very well-attended, with delegations from 109 States and 8 inter- and non-governmental organizations. We regret that negotiations could not commence after so many years of consultations, but we are confident that the rich and substantial discussions in New York both on the substance and on the process will help the international community to move forward.

General scientific progress has developed so rapidly that, these days, many military activities rely on the civilian technologies deployed in space. The deeply integrated nature of human activity in outer space demands that we consider future measures to improve international governance in outer space in a holistic manner, as envisaged in the proposed Code.

The European Union continues to believe that voluntary rules of the road for activities in outer space, such as the International Code of Conduct, would strengthen the safety, security and sustainability of the outer space environment. We stand ready to contribute to such efforts.

Thank you.