EU Statement

By

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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 Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union and its Member States continue to promote the preservation of a safe and secure space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. The EU recognises outer space as a global common good, to be used for the benefit of all. Strengthening the safety, security, sustainability and peaceful nature of outer space activities is best achieved through international cooperation.

The EU and its Member States are increasingly engaged in outer space. We have developed strong and unique space capacities and industry, allowing us to take part in major space endeavours. The EU, its Member States and the European Space Agency (ESA) together have the second largest budget for space in the world. Our technology and expertise make the EU a heavyweight on global space markets and both the EU space flagship programmes Galileo / EGNOS and Copernicus have made impressive progress recently.

Mr. Chairman,

Space is a responsibility as well as a global common, therefore it requires global governance. We believe that the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and other international space law as developed in the UN framework will remain the cornerstone of global governance of outer space and that COPUOS and its subcommittees are the main forum for inclusive dialogue and international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, for international space law and for space policy issues. We underline the importance of the COPUOS High Level Segment, UNISPACE +50, which took place this June in Vienna and celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first UN Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space – UNISPACE I. We appreciate the related draft Resolution foreseen for adoption by the UN General Assembly at its current session. The EU and its Member States will actively support the development of a “Space 2030” agenda within COPUOS.

We continue to stress the importance of transparency and confidence building measures enhancing the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space. Efforts to pursue political commitments through a comprehensive approach, as a complement to existing international law, such as codes of conduct, remain relevant. They were endorsed by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on TCBMs in outer space, set up by the UN Secretary-General in 2010. We will continue to promote principles of responsible behaviour in outer space, in the framework of the United Nations and other appropriate multilateral fora, as highlighted by the EEAS Special Envoy for Space at UNISPACE +50.

The EU and its Member States remain strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Preventing an arms race in outer space and preventing outer space from becoming another area of conflict are essential for the strengthening of international security and stability and for safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
We remain concerned about 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 maintain reservations regarding the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT). We reiterate our view that a new legally-binding instrument would need to be comprehensive, effective and verifiable.

We are also concerned that the initiative “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space” (NFP) does not adequately respond to the objective of strengthening trust and confidence between States and is thus rather increasing the risk of conflict in space. Notably, this initiative does not address the difficult issue of pertinently 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.

Operators are starting to launch constellations composed of hundreds or thousands of satellites, which will lead to an increase of the risk of collisions and subsequent clogging up of orbits due to the resulting debris. New technologies of Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST), active space debris removal or service satellites in orbit could play an important role in ensuring the sustainable use of space. We therefore underline the need to foster increased international cooperation, to establish standards of responsible behaviour and sustainable use across the full range of space activities, to strengthen commitments to non-interference in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, to facilitate equitable access to outer space, and to increase transparency of outer space activities.

We continue to believe that there could be value in agreeing a non-legally binding instrument, potentially to be negotiated within the framework of the UN, as a way to deliver these objectives, without excluding the possibility that a voluntary instrument may one day result in new legally-binding norms.

In particular, such a political commitment could build upon the COPUOS work undertaken so far on the Long Term Sustainability Guidelines and could be complementary to any Guidelines agreed upon by COPOUS in a follow up process. It could contribute to responsible behaviour and constitute a transparency and confidence building measure in outer space by creating a voluntary mechanism for notification of operations, such as scheduled manoeuvres that could pose a risk to life or property on the ground, or to the safety of flight of the space objects of other States.

Such notification could encompass predicted conjunctions posing an apparent on-orbit collision risk between space objects or between space objects and space debris; advance notice of launch and decommissioning or servicing of space objects; collisions, break-ups in orbit, and any other destruction of space objects which has taken place generating measurable orbital debris.

Such notification could also encompass predicted high-risk re-entry events, in which the re-entering space object, or residual material from the re-entering space object could potentially cause significant damage or radioactive contamination; and malfunctioning of space objects, or loss of control that could result in a significantly increased probability of a high risk re-entry event or in a collision between space objects.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman