Statement of the Delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt
73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee

Thematic Debate - Cluster 3: Outer-Space

Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the statements of the Arab Group, the African Group, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Outer-space is a shared heritage owned equally by all the peoples of the world, and a common asset for humanity. In today’s world, almost all aspects of human activities on earth are either directly or indirectly dependent on outer-space technologies. Taking into consideration the extreme fragility and volatility of the outer-space environment, it must not be allowed to turn into another “battlefield” or a scene for military conflicts that could have catastrophic implications.

There is a clear need for a legally binding instrument that would complement the existing international legal framework by preventing an arms race in outer-space and filling the existing legal gaps in this area, especially taking into consideration the alarming announcements by some States in relation to their plans of weaponizing outer-space, in addition to the continued development of military capabilities devoted to attack outer-space assets.

Such a legally binding instrument should have a comprehensive scope that includes four prohibitions:

1) a prohibition on the placement of any weapons, defensive or offensive, in outer-space,
2) a prohibition on any armed attacks against satellites or any outer-space assets,
3) a prohibition on any intentional harmful interference that interrupts the normal functioning of outer-space assets, and
4) a prohibition on the development, testing, and stockpiling of weapons that are specifically designed for the sole purpose of attacking outer-space assets or being deployed or used as a weapon in outer-space.
We believe that each of these prohibitions can be subject to reliable verification measures, using a diversified set of tools that could be supplemented by transparency measures, as well as a mechanism for consultations and dispute-settlement. We also believe that such an instrument can be designed to avoid any infringement on the full utilization of the peaceful uses of outer-space or dual-use technologies by all States for purposes other than weaponization. The required definitions can be easily determined in a manner that would avoid such infringement.

The existing legal framework, especially the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 represents a good basis. Nevertheless, there is a clear need for serious efforts to reach new legally binding instruments that complement the existing legal framework considering the relevant significant technological developments, and the need for assurances that outer-space would remain free of armed conflicts or arms races.

In this context, Egypt warmly welcomes the formation of the Governmental Group of Experts established pursuant to UNGA Resolution 72/250 and the constructive progress made in its first session in August 2018 which witnessed an unprecedented level of depth in the substantive discussions concerning all controversial legal and technical aspects, including the applicability of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

This remarkable progress can be largely attributed to the constructive approach adopted by all the experts of the Group and the able leadership of the Chair of the Group, as well as the professional and dedicated efforts of UNODA and UNIDIR. We look forward to the adoption of the Group’s final report which might represent a significant step in the international efforts in this regard by putting forward substantive elements for a possible treaty.

Mr. Chairman

Egypt once more joins Sri Lanka in tabling the annual resolution entitled “Prevention of Arms Race in the Outer Space”. And we count on the support of all Member States to this important resolution.

Thank you.