Co-Chairs of the First and Fourth Committees,

I am pleased to make this intervention on behalf of the following countries: Albania, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

At the outset, we thank you for organising this timely discussion of our future efforts to ensure the security and long-term sustainability of outer space activities. Our thanks also to the panellists for their contributions.

Co-Chairs,

Today, the world is ever more reliant on space assets for its prosperity and its security. Indeed, more countries are becoming spacefaring nations, and more companies are able to access and operate in space. The development of space technology has brought tremendous benefits to all nations, such as earth observation for agriculture, navigation for ships and aircraft, remote sensing for measuring the effects of climate change, telecommunications and weather monitoring.

All actors need to take responsibility for keeping space a stable, safe and sustainable environment, allowing current actors to continue to operate with minimal disruption, and assuring emerging ones that the domain will remain accessible for future generations. We believe that
there is a common interest in maintaining peace and security in outer space for the benefit of all, although we recognise there are different views on how to achieve this.

As your Concept Note points out, safety and sustainability concerns in space now intersect with traditional security concerns. We welcome the convening role that the UN system is playing in bringing together governments, commercial actors and academics, such as UNIDIR's annual Space Security Conference in Geneva and the COPUOS Space 2030 agenda. We note that there is an important distinction between discussions in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on security and those at COPUOS in Vienna on peaceful uses, which is mirrored in the UN General Assembly between its First and Fourth Committees. At the same time, the issues covered are often the same, even if the emphasis or focus differs between each venue. As there is merit in avoiding duplication, we particularly welcome today's discussion.

Co-Chairs,

Existing international law, in particular the United Nations Charter, the Outer Space Treaty and related guidelines, provides us with a framework of principles, such as the freedom to use and explore outer space for peaceful purposes. The effective implementation of the legal framework, alongside the promotion of regulatory arrangements that encourage safety, participation and innovation, will be increasingly important as space activities increase.

In the context of the rapidly changing space environment, our countries have identified a number of substantive issues that, if addressed more
effectively, would help improve sustainability, security and transparency. These issues are primarily discussed in COPUOS, but are relevant also to traditional security concerns. There is an increased risk that crises or conflict in space would extend to the Earth. We would like to describe four such issues today.

First, launch. With the rapid growth in the launch industry, we need to reduce the risk of mistrust and misunderstanding caused by launches that are not de-conflicted or properly notified. This could be done by ensuring minimum safety standards are met, by publishing timely notifications, and by operators explaining to the international community what their spacecraft will do and the effects they will have.

Second, debris mitigation and management. Without coordination and information exchange among governments, space agencies, commercial space actors and other related parties, there is a significant risk to the safety, sustainability and security of future space operations. We also need to refrain from actions that intentionally create multiple long-lived debris, such as direct ascent ASAT tests or kinetic attacks by space objects on others.

Third, space situational awareness. To keep space sustainable and safe, efficient communication and enhanced knowledge regarding objects and events in space is critical. As discussions in COPUOS have demonstrated, further work on space traffic management, particularly on how to draw on the innovative work done by the private sector, would also satisfy the common interest in improved space situational awareness of the international community.
Fourth, with the recent developments in on-orbit servicing, rendezvous, proximity operations and active debris removal capabilities, objects will increasingly be in close proximity to each other. It is therefore important to ensure that the intentions of approaching objects are known. In order to mitigate the risks in these circumstances, we should develop transparency and confidence building measures or guidance materials for on-orbit servicing and active debris removal. It will also be crucial to have open lines of communication for incidents where a miscalculation could lead to a perception of a threat to an object.

Co-Chairs,

So, the question for the international community is what can we do to reduce these risks? And how do we deal with threats to space systems, including those from the earth. It is our belief that we must take steps to ensure a stable international environment.

We can reduce risk, whether of a civil or military nature, through cooperation and effective communications that can enhance international confidence in our outer space activities. We welcome the adoption at COPUOS in June of a preamble and 21 guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. COPUOS has a proud history of developing the space legal framework we have in place today. The long-term sustainability guidelines once again highlights the important role of COPUOS in setting new international space standards. Its work in this regard should therefore be supported and promoted. We look forward to discussing how to put these guidelines into practical effect, as well as considering topics for further work.
Our countries believe that the best way to address threats posed by and to objects in space is an incremental approach in Geneva that looks for solutions to practical problems. We need to establish norms of behaviour, for both private and government space operators. And we should consider how to treat threats from the earth. By developing and following norms, we would form the foundation for trust and co-operation between operators in the space environment. This could form the basis from which to further consider a legally-binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Co-Chairs,

To keep space sustainable and safe, efficient communication regarding objects and events in space is critical. It also will be crucial to establish lines of communication for incidents where a miscalculation could lead to a perception of a hostile threat. We should also consider how to signal intent and demonstrate responsible behaviours.

We believe that progress in Vienna could be complemented in Geneva through discussions about how to reduce the risks and threats to operations in space. As a start, the Conference on Disarmament could encourage all spacefaring nations to present an overview of their national space defence policies. Encouraging this type of exchange could play a crucial role in building common understanding through increased transparency, thus reducing the risks to operations in space.

Co-Chairs,
We hope that everyone can be part of this discussion. We would welcome the panel’s views on how states could become involved in a process to develop new ideas on how to reduce risks. After all, maintaining the sustainability and security of outer space is for the benefit of all.

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