Statement by Ambassador Hu Xiaodi
Representative of the People’s Republic of China
to the First Committee of the 57th Session
of the UN General Assembly
On the Issue of Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space

(2002/10/15, New York)

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like, on behalf of the Chinese Delegation, to express our serious concerns to the severe explosion incidents took place at Bali Island and other areas of Indonesia. We would also like to express our deep condolence to the heavy losses of lives and casualties of innocent people, and strongly condemn such violent activities.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to put forward China’s views on the prevention of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space (PAROS).

One of humankind’s greatest achievements in the 20th century is opening of the new frontier in outer space. Not only has its dream over the past thousand years of traveling in outer space come true, the quality of its life has also been greatly lifted by the new environment and unlimited resources provided by outer space. Industries related to global satellite remote sensing, telecommunication, navigation and positioning are booming rapidly with their annual avenues reaching billions of US dollars. Meteorological and geo-survey satellites are playing an important role in reducing and preventing natural disasters. Meanwhile, the researches on material and life science in space environment have a promising future. Outer space has already become part and parcel of the modern civilization of humankind. In the 21st century, the importance of outer space to humanity will further increase.

However, while sharing the fruits of the peaceful use of outer space and yearning for a better future, we are facing a series of grave challenges. The research and development of space weapons and the unveiling of
space combat theories, just to name a few, clearly indicate that outer space is facing the increasing danger of weaponization and an arms race. If the trend is not reversed, countries will be compelled to take measures to protect the security of their space assets and relevant ground facilities in the near future. The peaceful use of outer space will also be more costly, vulnerable satellites and manned spaceships will have to orbit a weaponized space, also full of weapon debris. Efforts for peaceful uses of outer space will be retarded, and fruitful achievements endangered. Future generations will have to live under the Damocles sword, and pay a high price in dealing with "non-proliferation of outer space weapons" and "disarmament or reduction of outer space weapons".

Over the years, the international community has realized the severe consequences of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, and made unremitting efforts in codifying and improving relevant international legal regimes as well as regulating activities of states in outer space. The Outer Space Treaty, ABM Treaty, Registration Convention, Moon Agreement had been subsequently concluded. They have played a positive role in preventing the weaponization of outer space in the past decades by stopping the introduction of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in outer space. Nevertheless, with the rapid development of space technology for military purposes, the shortcomings and loopholes of the above legal instruments in relation to the prohibition of the deployment of weapons other than WMD and use or threat of forces against outer space objects have been gradually revealed. As the weaponization of outer space grows increasingly salient, the above instruments are not up to the task. It has become a pressing task for the international community to negotiate and conclude a legal instrument to arrest the negative slide towards the weaponization and an arms race in outer space.

Mr. Chairman,

As an important forum of international arms control and disarmament, the First Committee of UNGA has adopted over twenty resolutions on PAROS. In recent years, the PAROS resolution was adopted without a negative vote. This clearly shows the paramount importance the international community attached to this issue and the political will to address it. This year, China will continue to co-sponsor the resolution on PAROS (A/C.1/57/L30). However, there still lacks progress in the implementation of these resolutions. It is particularly regrettable that
as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has yet to conduct substantive work on PAROS as requested by the relevant UNGA resolutions. The international community has devoted much attention to ways of breaking the current stalemate on PAROS. We call upon this Committee to continue to pay attention and attach importance to PAROS issue, and redouble efforts for its solution.

Mr. Chairman,

China has all along advocated the use of outer space solely for peaceful purposes, and committed itself to the common endeavor for preventing the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. We believe that relevant UNGA resolutions should be implemented, and the CD "has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects". This June, China and the Russian Federation, together with Viet Nam, Indonesia, Belarus, Zimbabwe, Syria Arab Republic jointly submitted to the CD a working paper entitled Possible Elements for a Future International Legal Agreement on the Prevention of the Deployment of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (Draft) (CD/1679). The paper lays out our preliminary views on the general framework of a legal instrument on outer space. This working paper has already been circulated as an official document of the current session of the UNGA.

In our view, in order to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, the following basic obligations should be established, as laid out in CD/1679:

- not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying any kinds of weapons, not to install such weapons on celestial bodies, or not to station such weapons in outer space in any other manner;
- not to resort to the threat or use of force against outer space objects;
- not to assist or encourage other States, groups of States, international organizations to participate in activities prohibited by the above Legal Agreement.

It should be pointed out that the aim of submitting this working paper is to implement PAROS resolutions and realize the goal of preventing the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space through multilateral cooperation. We are pleased to note that there exist broad common
understandings on this objective. We are open to constructive views and amendments, so as to further develop and improve this document.

Mr. Chairman,

Peaceful use of outer space reflects the common will and fundamental interests of the international community. Preventing the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space is in the interest of all countries and should be our common responsibility. Let us get the process moving by displaying political will and determination, and strive for the early negotiation and conclusion of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space, and of the use or threat of force against outer space objects. We owe it to future generations to keep space free from weapons and wars. Now we all should make due contributions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.