Statement by Ambassador Hu Xiaodi, Representative of the People’s Republic of China to the First Committee of the 58th Session of the UN General Assembly On the Issue of Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (2003 October 21, New York)

Mr Chairman,
On October 15 and 16, China successfully conducted its first manned-spacecraft flight. We will consistently strive for promoting lofty cause of mankind to make the peaceful use of outer space while continuing to work with all other countries all over the world for preventing weaponization of and arms race in outer space.

Mr Chairman,
Over the past 50 years or so, as space technology advances, tremendous progress has been registered in the economic, scientific, technological and social fields worldwide. Our daily lives, commercial activities and scientific research have been increasingly related to outer space. As such, outer space has become part and parcel of the modern civilization of humankind. However, the development of space technology has also brought about the research and development of space weapons and application of military technology. Relevant theory and policy associated with outer space warfare such as “control and occupation of outer space” have come to the fore. The research and development of space weapon systems are being putting into practice. The risk of the weaponization of outer space is mounting. In the meantime, the existing international legal instruments are not sufficient for curbing effectively the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space.

Outer space is the common heritage of mankind. To ensure the peaceful use of outer space and prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space are to the common interest and also the common responsibility of all countries. The history and experience of disarmament and arms control demonstrate that to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, we must not remain idle until outer space weapons have been putting in place and causing damages. It would be too far late if one country leads in ushering weapons into outer space, with others states following suit and the prospect of “space weapon proliferation” looming large. Therefore, the key is to take preventive measures. Otherwise, the right of using outer space for peaceful purposes and the security of outer space assets will be put in jeopardy. To conclude an international legal agreement to prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space
without further delay stands out as the best way.

Based on these principled positions, China offered its propositions and suggestions on PAROS in the form of CD documents in 1985, 2000 and 2001 respectively. Building upon that, in 2002, China and the Russian Federation, together with the delegations of Viet Nam, Indonesia, Belarus, Zimbabwe and the Syrian 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”.

On September 25 this year, the Russian Federation announced its obligation not to be the first to deploy offensive strike weapons in outer space, stood for developing a comprehensive agreement on this issue and invited all countries possessing space potential to join its initiative. This is a very positive step forward, moving to a direction in line with China’s proposals.

In the same spirit, on August 7 this year, China expressed its willingness to join consensus on the initiative of Five Ambassadors with regard to the program of work of the CD. We hope that other parties would live up to the expectations of the international community and respond positively so as to help reach an agreement on a comprehensive and balanced work program at the CD, with a view to conducting substantive work on all important issues, including the prevention of an arms race in outer space, towards negotiating relevant international legal instruments.

Mr. Chairman,

The First Committee of UNGA reflects the wishes of all countries and peoples with regard to disarmament and international security. Over the years, the General Assembly has adopted many resolutions on outer space, which illustrate the willingness of the overwhelming majority of countries and peoples to ensure the peaceful use of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This year, China will once again co-sponsor the PAROS draft resolution. In order that the future generations could embrace a peaceful and tranquil sky, we stand ready to work with the international community to continue to attach great importance to the issue of outer space and push forward concrete measures aimed at the complete prohibition of outer space weapons.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.