Madame Chair:

The lack in recent years of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) at the Conference on Disarmament has not prevented some worthwhile discussion and proposals from being generated – proposals for which we have a responsibility to consider and, where appropriate, to act upon.

Discussions held at the UNIDIR Space Security Seminar in March, the series of structured discussions in the Conference on Disarmament during its last session, and discussion here in the First Committee – taken together – reinforce, in our view, the need to develop an increasingly broad concept of space security that addresses not only the weaponization of outer space but also the broader military, environmental, commercial and civil dimensions of space.

When we talk about ensuring secure and sustainable access to and use of space for peaceful purposes, we are in fact using such a broad approach to space security. As we all draw ever-increasing benefits from space assets Canada believes strongly that space-faring and non-space-faring nations alike share a stake and a responsibility in ensuring that human actions do not jeopardize the current and future benefits offered to us by outer space.

To this end, we continue to believe that the work of the international community could be optimized by enhancing dialogue between the various UN bodies with an interest in outer space. Such dialogue would include, for example, the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), the International Telecommunications Union, the Conference on Disarmament and the UN General Assembly, particularly its First and Fourth Committees.

Regarding the development of cooperative activity that would enhance secure and sustainable access to, and use of, space for peaceful purposes, two areas merit special consideration in our view.

A key element of a multilateral architecture for space security would be negotiation in the CD of an appropriately scoped, legally binding ban on space-based weapons. Canada welcomes the contribution that many delegations have made in the discussions to date on what such a negotiated treaty would look like and what it would need in terms of definitions, scope, verification, participation and so forth. Expert presentations on these and other elements of a space-based weapons ban continue to be needed in order to build consensus within the CD on the way forward. In this regard, I would note that Canada provided two working papers to last June’s “space week” at the CD, one devoted to a “legal gap analysis” of international restraints in outer space, the other on space-based verification.
Canada believes that the sheer growth of space activities world-wide and the commercial as well as national security benefits derived from space activities provide a strong rationale and incentive for the global community to work cooperatively in ensuring that such benefits are maintained. Developing rules of the road, space debris mitigation guidelines, more coordinated space traffic management – these are some of the ideas that could contribute to this end. Indeed, a number of such ideas are starting to gain interest or are already under consideration – not only in the CD, but elsewhere, such as in COPUOS.

As a means of dispelling potential misperceptions about space activities, transparency and confidence-building measures hold promise, particularly if they are used in a non-interfering or non-intrusive manner, but still robust enough to give states a degree of reassurance about the intent and purpose of space launches. If designed properly, confidence-building measures relating to outer space can indeed enhance the safety of space assets, especially if such measures focus on the conduct and cooperative management of space activity.

In order to stimulate wide-ranging discussion of the merits of developing and applying CBMs for outer space, Canada has put together a short paper pursuant to UNGA Resolution 60/66 listing some of the types of transparency and confidence-building measures relating to outer space that have been developed and applied both bilaterally and multilaterally. We have also included a couple of CBM ideas that have been mooted in the past as illustrations of the range of thinking on this subject. A copy of this paper is appended to my statement and is being distributed in the hall.

Madame Chair:

Canada believes that the international community’s collective interest in preserving secure and sustainable access to and use of space, free of space-based threats, requires preventive diplomacy as well as discussion. Redoubling our efforts to build mutual confidence and ensure space security is our collective challenge. I am hopeful that our discussions here in the First Committee and subsequently in other fora, including the Conference on Disarmament, will move us closer to meeting that challenge.

Thank you.