As prepared for delivery

Statement by
George Pataki,
nominated by President George W. Bush
to serve as Public Delegate to the 62nd UNGA,
at the Thematic Debate on
"Outer Space (Disarmament Aspects)"
in the First Committee of the General Assembly
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The United States Delegation takes the floor today to discuss an issue of great importance – international cooperation in the peaceful use and exploration of outer space. This cooperation is based on a shared interest in ensuring the free access to and use of space for peaceful purposes by all nations.

The “Space Race” Is History

Mr. Chairman, the public lobby of this building contains a reminder of the first half-century of the space age. Suspended from the ceiling is a replica of Sputnik 1, the first artificial earth satellite. Today, historians term the twelve years between the launch of the first Sputnik and the first landing of American astronauts on the Moon as the era of the “Space Race.” In the United States, the Soviet Union’s technological coup – combined with the opaque nature of Soviet society - spurred fears of a “missile gap.” In response, the United States pursued a wide-ranging series of programs relating to space exploration that included both civilian and military applications.

Although spurred by Cold War anxieties, this space rivalry yielded results that proved to be a boon to all humanity. Investments by a number of nations in space research and technology led to new capabilities for scientific research, communications, environmental monitoring, navigation, and remote sensing. In the United States, these advances were accompanied by the development of the Corona photo-reconnaissance satellite. Information from Corona provided important insights into the military activities of closed societies, and thereby aided assessments relating to treaty compliance and the military capabilities of the former Soviet Union and other closed societies of that era.

As the world marks the fiftieth anniversary of Sputnik 1, the United States remains committed to continued leadership in peaceful uses of space. The United States also takes pride in its contributions to the efforts of the United Nations to establish and sustain the principle of free access to, and use of, outer space by all nations for peaceful purposes. These diplomatic efforts included the General Assembly’s Declaration of
Legal Principles in 1962, which formed the basis for the key precepts of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. These principles helped to bring an end to the Cold War-era “space race.” They also set the stage for continuing international cooperation in space exploration and applications.

The International Space Station, which will pass 350 kilometers above New York this evening, is today the centerpiece of humanity’s collective desire to explore, work, and live together on the “final frontier.” The United States, Russia, Europe, Canada, Japan and Brazil are pooling their resources and expertise in this collaborative effort that builds upon years of peaceful cooperation and development.

This philosophy of shared peaceful use and benefit is embedded firmly in the United States National Space Policy, signed by President George W. Bush on August 31, 2006. This policy firmly commits the U.S. to the basic principles set forth in the Outer Space Treaty. As we look to the future, the United States anticipates continued hopes for expanded international cooperation as humans return to the moon and plan new space exploration ventures.

In addition to exploration, Mr. Chairman, the United States looks forward to discussing new opportunities to cooperate with other space-faring nations in the peaceful use of outer space. In the area of space activities supporting international peace and security, one possible topic is transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs).

The need for cooperation was highlighted earlier this year when China intentionally destroyed its own weather satellite with a direct-ascent anti-satellite missile on January 11. Experts estimate that the debris created by this test includes over 2,200 trackable objects and another 33,000 pieces of debris greater than 1 centimeter in size but too small to track. Much of this debris will persist well into the Twenty-Second Century, creating dangerous hazards to human spaceflight and other peaceful activities in low Earth orbit.

The United States hopes that China will be more forthcoming with the international community regarding the motivations for, and the specific circumstances surrounding, its anti-satellite (ASAT) test. China’s test generated international concern regarding the hazards that the test posed to human spaceflight and other peaceful space activities and was conducted without prior notice or consultations with other nations. The anti-satellite test also was conducted contrary to debris mitigation guidelines established by two international groups, the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) and the Debris Mitigation Working Group of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). Both of these groups included Chinese government space experts.

Mr. Chairman, while we obviously are concerned about China’s ASAT test its other activities, the United States sees no reason for the events of January 11 to prompt an arms race in outer space. Instead, the United States will continue to pursue measures that protect its vital national interests in space, including cooperation with both established and emerging space-faring nations, while taking those actions necessary to protect its space capabilities and to respond to purposeful interference with its space systems.

We have a solid foundation for discussions on cooperation and ways to ensure the free access and use of space. For nearly forty years, we have operated in accord with the fundamental principles of the Outer Space Treaty. We also have additional instruments, such as the 1968 Rescue and Return Agreement, the 1972 Liability Convention, and the 1975 Registration Convention. The principles established in these four core space
treaties have stood the test of time because they created the fundamental guidelines required for the free access to, and use of, outer space for peaceful purposes.

Our global society relies on the capabilities provided by space. The people of Earth are able to communicate, travel, and conduct commerce in unprecedented ways because the use of outer space is recognized as the province of all humanity. Mr. Chairman, the United States believes that all nations have a right to use space for peaceful purposes, and to do so without harmful interference or exposure to unnecessary hazards.

The United States also believes that any international evaluation of transparency and confidence-building measures must begin by considering the continuing progress in work carried out by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The recent adoption in COPUOS of debris mitigation guidelines, based on the previous work of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, illustrates the value of a pragmatic approach based on discussions among technical experts. COPUOS's plans to consider in 2008 the topic of the long-term sustainability of space activities could be an important step toward future efforts to establish "best practices" for safe and responsible space operations.

In support of these efforts, the United States voluntarily offers its unclassified space object tracking data, free of charge, to any nation as well as to commercial operators and civil society. In fact, we are so committed to the peaceful and transparent use of space that we are considering ways we can expand our efforts to provide new spaceflight safety services to spacecraft operators around the world. This is an example of our commitment to safe space operations for all nations.

Providing space tracking data is but one manifestation of space transparency. The United States has been quite open about the basic principles of its space policies, which most recently were described in our October 6, 2006 fact sheet on the U.S. National Space Policy. On the very first page of this document, the United States reaffirms its commitment to the principle of free access to and the use of space by all nations for peaceful purposes, as it has since the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Additionally, the new policy lists other basic principles that guide U.S. actions in space. One of these guiding principles is that the United States will continue seeking cooperation with other nations in the peaceful use of outer space.

Mr. Chairman, the United States stands ready to work with other nations to extend the benefits of space, to enhance space exploration, and to use space to protect and promote freedom around the world. All we ask in return is that other nations demonstrate similar transparency regarding their own intentions in space.

The United States welcomes the recent joint space policy statement by the councils of the European Union and the European Space Agency. We also join our friends in Europe in encouraging other space-faring nations and regional groups to make their space policies more visible and understandable to other nations, which will lead to a better understanding of their current and planned space activities.

**Space Arms Control**

Finally, permit me to address an area that the United States believes is counterproductive in regard to the interests of maintaining international peace and security in outer space. As we have said repeatedly in this and other fora, the United
States believes that discussions regarding the merits of treaties to prevent the so-called "weaponization" of outer space would be a pointless exercise. Long experience has shown the futility of attempting to define what constitutes a "space weapon" or to verify effectively any proposed limitation of such weapons.

Consequently, the United States will continue to oppose the development of new legal regimes or other restrictions that seek to prohibit or limit access to, or use of, outer space. We also will oppose vigorously any attempt to create superficially appealing, but inherently flawed, linkages between the pursuit of pragmatic transparency and confidence-building measures and legally binding space arms control constraints and limitations. One does not necessarily need a treaty to foster good practices and common understanding. Rather, one needs good faith and good will.

Since the 1970s, five consecutive U.S. administrations have come to the same conclusions on the impossibility of achieving an effectively verifiable and militarily meaningful space arms control agreement. Indeed, separate negotiations during the administrations of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald W. Reagan failed for a variety of reasons, including the inability to agree on the scope of coverage, and the impossibility of identifying effective means to verify compliance with any such agreement. It is time for the international community to move beyond unnecessary and counterproductive discussions over the merits of unverifiable treaties and space arms control regimes designed to forestall this chimerical "arms race" in outer space.

In simple terms, Mr. Chairman, any object orbiting or transiting through outer space can be a weapon if that object is placed intentionally on a collision course with another space object. This makes treaty verification impossible. Given the commonality of technology, the only way to distinguish a co-orbital satellite interceptor from a non-threatening autonomous servicing vehicle is to determine the operator's intent. The best way to determine intent is for national authorities to have a clear understanding of each other's policies and strategies for space activities.

Mr. Chairman, the United States categorically rejects the premise that transparency and confidence-building measures are useful only in the context of preventing the so-called "weaponization" of outer space. In fact, there are a number of such measures already in place.

The United States also supports non-binding bilateral measures to enhance stability and reduce uncertainty in the conduct of military space operations. In addition to dialogues on national and defense space policies, bilateral confidence-building activities can occur at the working level. One such example are the forthcoming exchanges between American and Russian space launch and military satellite movement control specialists, which are occurring as part of a broader set of military-to-military activities under the U.S.-Russia Interoperability Work Plan.

It is therefore with regret, Mr. Chairman, that I must note our disappointment that we were unable to reach agreement this year with Russia on a draft General Assembly resolution to examine the feasibility of new voluntary TCBMs. We had hoped that such a resolution could build upon the concrete proposals recently advanced by Russia and the European Union, as well as thoughtful suggestions from technical experts in the commercial space sector. Unfortunately, we could not reach agreement on a resolution that removes what the United States believes is a false and unacceptable linkage between
expert assessments of pragmatic TCBMs and efforts to begin pointless negotiations on unverifiable space arms control agreements.

As the world's first two space-faring nations, and as former Cold War rivals attempting to build a strategic partnership, the United States and Russia understand the value of bilateral measures to enhance stability and reduce the chance for misunderstandings. We regret this lost opportunity to work together in this area. Nevertheless, we shall welcome new opportunities for substantive discussions on outer space TCBMs with Russia, with other established and emerging space-faring nations, and with experts from civil society.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is a leader in the exploration of outer space, and we believe in strengthening international cooperation for the further use of and continued exploration of outer space. We are always prepared to discuss constructive proposals for measures that protect the outer space environment and protect free access to and use of space for the benefit of all. Our Delegation appreciates the opportunity to share the United States position on this important issue. I call on all other space-faring nations to continue this dialogue with us so that we all may continue the exploration of space under peaceful and cooperative conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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