Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

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at the First Committee

On

Outer Space Cluster

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
Mr Chairman,

1. I speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

2. The growing number of actors and rapid development of activities in outer space reinforce the longstanding position of the EU and its Member States in favour of the enhancement of the multilateral framework concerning the preservation of a peaceful, safe and secure environment in outer space. The EU stresses that the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the need to prevent outer space from becoming an area of conflict are essential conditions for the strengthening of strategic stability. The European Union is fully committed to strengthening the security of activities in outer space that contribute to the development and security of states. To this end, the EU aims at promoting international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

3. We are particularly sensitive to the issue of the safety of space systems and urge all States to take necessary measures and actions aiming at mitigating the creation of space debris.

4. The EU is participating in the discussions in the Conference on Disarmament on various aspects of space security. In that context, we have noted the proposal by the Russian Federation and China of a draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects. We have also noted ideas for a legally binding prohibition on testing and use of anti-satellite weapons.

5. The European Union promotes the elaboration of an international and voluntary set of guidelines, a tool that would strengthen safety, security and predictability of all space activities. Such guidelines should, among other things, limit or minimise harmful interference, collisions or accidents in outer space, as well as the creation of debris.

6. To this end, the European Union has been elaborating in recent years a draft Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities. In the past months the EU has conducted extensive consultations with several space-faring states. On the basis of the views expressed by partners, we have produced a revised version of the draft Code of Conduct that we intend to discuss with UN MS in the margins of the current session of the UN General Assembly First Committee.

7. The draft Code is based on three principles:

- freedom for all to use outer space for peaceful purposes;
- preservation of the security and integrity of space objects in orbit;
- due consideration for the legitimate security and defence needs of States.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
8. Our proposed draft foresees that the Code would be applicable to all outer space activities conducted by States or non-governmental entities. As the draft code would be voluntary and open to all States, it would lay down the basic rules to be observed by space faring nations in both civil and military space activities. The draft Code does not include any provisions concerning the placement of weapons in outer space. The purpose of the draft Code is not to duplicate or compete with initiatives already dealing with this specific issue. On the contrary, as a transparency and confidence building measure, the draft Code does insist on the importance to take all measures in order to prevent space from becoming an area of conflict and calls on nations to resolve any conflict in outer space by peaceful means.

9. The aim of the EU is to find agreement in the very next weeks on a text that is acceptable to all interested States and that thus bring effective security benefits in a relatively short term. At the end of the consultation process, the EU hopes to be able to propose a final version of the Code of Conduct that would be open to participation by all States on a voluntary basis at an ad hoc conference to be organized in the first half of 2011.

Thank you.