Statement by
Ambassador Laura E. Kennedy to the 65th Session of the
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Mr. Chairman, the space age began as a race for security and prestige between two superpowers. The opportunities were boundless, and the decades that followed have seen a radical transformation in the way we live our daily lives, in large part due to our use of space. Space systems have taken us to other celestial bodies and extended humankind’s horizons back in time to the very first moments of the universe and out to the galaxies at its far reaches. Satellites contribute to increased transparency and stability among nations and provide a vital communications path for avoiding potential conflicts. Space systems allow people and governments around the world to see with clarity, communicate with certainty, navigate with accuracy, and operate with assurance.

The legacy of success in space and its transformation also presents new challenges. When the space age began, the opportunities to use space were limited to only a few nations, and the impact of irresponsible or unintentional behavior was limited. Now, we find ourselves in a world where the benefits of space permeate almost every facet of our lives – and the consequences for irresponsible behavior are far greater for all of us.

The growth and evolution of the global economy has ushered in an ever-increasing number of nations and organizations using space. The interconnected nature of space capabilities and the world’s growing dependence on them mean that irresponsible acts in space can have damaging consequences for all of us. For example, decades of space activity have littered Earth’s orbit with debris. As the world’s space-faring nations continue to increase activities in space, the chance for a collision between space objects increases correspondingly.

As the leading space-faring nation, the United States is committed to addressing these challenges. But this cannot be the responsibility of only one state alone. All nations have the right to use and explore space, but with this right also comes responsibility. All nations must work together to adopt approaches for responsible activity in space in order to preserve this right for the benefit of future generations.

The United States continues to be committed to enhance the welfare of humankind by cooperating with others to maintain the freedom of space.
Mr. Chairman, this spirit of cooperation is reflected in the National Space Policy of the United States that was released on June 28, 2010. This policy emphasizes that the United States will adhere to several long-standing principles – principles that we propose other nations recognize and adhere to as well. They include the following:

- It is in the shared interest of all nations to act responsibly in space to help prevent mishaps, misperceptions, and mistrust;

- The United States considers the sustainability, stability, and free access to, and use of, space vital to its national interests; and

- All nations have the right to explore and use space for peaceful purposes, and for the benefit of all humanity, in accordance with international law. Consistent with this principle, “peaceful purposes” allows for space to be used for national and homeland security activities.

In his directive on National Space Policy, President Obama also provided specific goals for America’s space programs to promote this spirit of cooperation.

In the area of international cooperation, the United States will build upon its current efforts both in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and with intergovernmental organizations and the private sector to address the growing problem of orbital debris. Furthermore, the United States will seek to improve shared awareness of actions in space that are contrary to its responsible use, and to promote “best practices” for long-term sustainability of the space environment.

The United States will also pursue pragmatic bilateral and multilateral transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) to mitigate the risk of mishaps, misperceptions, and mistrust. The National Space Policy affirms that we are open to considering space-related arms control concepts and proposals, provided they meet the rigorous criteria of equitability, effective verifiability, and enhance the national security interests of the United States and its allies.

With regard to TCBMs, the United States supports measures that not only enhance U.S. security, but also the security of our allies, friends, and space partners. Examples of bilateral space-related TCBMs include dialogues on national security space policies and strategies, expert visits to military satellite flight control centers, and discussions on mechanisms for information exchanges on natural and debris hazards. The adoption of international norms or multilateral “codes of conduct” are also examples of TCBMs.

Promptly following the February 2009 collision between commercial Iridium
spacecraft and an inactive Russian military satellite, the United States and Russia were in direct communication to discuss the incident. This experience is contributing to the on-going dialogue with Russia on developing additional concrete and pragmatic bilateral TCBMs that will enhance mutual trust and confidence. We conducted a bilateral space security dialogue between experts on August 24 in Moscow, where we reviewed national space policy developments and opportunities for reciprocal site visits and collaboration in multilateral fora.

In addition to these exchanges, the United States looks forward to implementing a range of reciprocal military-to-military exchanges, including many of the specific measures noted by Russia in its past submissions to the Secretary General. In particular, the United States has invited Russian military space officials to participate in an international space symposium next month in Omaha, Nebraska, and to visit the United States Strategic Command’s Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

The United States also stands ready to discuss space security with China as part of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, the U.S.-China Security Dialogue and through military-to-military exchanges. Such exchanges fulfill the call of President Obama and President Hu in the joint statement of November 17, 2009, to take steps to enhance security in outer space.

In the area of multilateral TCBMs, the United States is completing an extensive review of the European Union’s initiative to develop a comprehensive set of multilateral TCBMs, also known as the “Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities.” Over the past three years, the United States has been actively consulting with the EU on the Code. It is our hope to make a decision in the coming months as to whether the United States can sign on to such a Code, pending our ongoing review and the results of further consultations with the EU and other like-minded nations.

Here in the First Committee, the United States looks forward to continued and substantive discussions on pragmatic and voluntary TCBMs. At the same time, we are disappointed that it was not possible for the United States to join in co-sponsorship of Russia’s resolution establishing a group of government experts (GGE) to assess options for TCBMs. The United States offered the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China a constructive draft resolution for co-sponsorship. Regrettably, neither party was willing to drop linkage between this and their proposal for a so-called “Prevention of Placement of Weapons in Outer Space Treaty” (or “PPWT” for short).
The United States cannot support attempts to establish artificial linkages between pragmatic and voluntary TCBMs and such fundamentally flawed proposals for arms control such as the PPWT. After conducting a comprehensive review of space arms control options, the United States has reaffirmed its analysis and conclusion, noted in a submission made to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in August 2008, that the Russian-Chinese draft PPWT provides no grounds for the United States to support establishing an ad hoc committee to negotiate any such treaty proposal at the CD.

The PPWT co-sponsors themselves acknowledge that their proposal is unverifiable. Furthermore, as one of the PPWT’s co-sponsors acknowledged in informal discussions at the CD in February 2007, the proposed treaty does nothing to prevent the development, testing and deployment of terrestrially-based direct ascent anti-satellite weapons, such as the one that intentionally destroyed a satellite in January 2007. This action created long-lived debris which will continue to pose dangers to spaceflight safety well into the Twenty-Second Century.

Despite these disturbing trends, Mr. Chairman, TCBMs can strengthen stability by reducing mistrust, enhancing mutual understanding, and broadening cooperation. The United States stands ready to work with all space-faring nations to develop a secure, stable, and sustainable space environment. While we have concerns about some provisions of the draft resolution proposed by Russia and China, we are supportive of the resolution’s establishment of a group of government experts to examine voluntary and pragmatic TCBMs in space that solve concrete problems. We look forward to working with our colleagues on this effort in such a GGE.

Mr Chairman, as President Obama stated when releasing the National Space Policy, “No longer are we racing against an adversary; in fact, one of our central goals is to promote peaceful cooperation and collaboration in space, which not only will ward off conflict, but will help to expand our capacity to operate in orbit and beyond…. In short, this policy, while new, reflects the standards of leadership we have set since the dawn of the space age, and ideals as old as America itself. We do not fear the future; we embrace the future.”

In releasing its National Space Policy, the United States renewed its pledge of cooperation in the belief that, with strengthened international collaboration and reinvigorated U.S. leadership, all nations and peoples -- space-faring and space-benefiting -- will find their horizons broadened, their knowledge enhanced, and their lives greatly improved. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.