Mr. Chairman, today space systems touch nearly all aspects of our daily lives, and are vital to enhancing our national security, foreign policy, and global economic interests, as well as expanding scientific knowledge. Space exploration was characterized for years as a race between two superpowers, but today, virtually all governments, their citizens, and commercial sectors rely on space systems. These systems provide global benefits as well as national benefits and contribute to enhancing stability in 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.

All nations have the right to use and explore space, but with this right also comes responsibility. The United States is committed to addressing the challenges of today’s contested space environment. Indeed, 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. It is in the shared interest of all nations to help prevent mishaps, misperceptions, and mistrust.

The United States is committed to strengthening international collaboration to enhance safety, sustainability, stability, and security in space. The U.S. 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 and effective verifiability, and enhance the national security of the United States and its allies. The United States cannot support proposals for arms control that do not meet these criteria, nor can we support attempts to establish artificial linkages between such proposals and pragmatic and voluntary transparency and confidence building measures (TCBMs).

Measures that promote transparency and confidence building, such as providing prior notifications of launches of space launch vehicles, establishing “best practices guidelines,” and warning of risks of collisions between space objects, enhance
stability, safety, and sustainability, and thus strengthen our mutual security interests.

Our bilateral space-related TCBM efforts include close approach notifications, discussions on mechanisms for information exchanges on natural and debris hazards, expert visits to military satellite flight control centers, and regular Space Security Dialogues with both established and emerging space-faring nations. The experience of the 2009 collision between a commercial Iridium communications satellite and an inoperable Russian Cosmos military satellite was a great impetus in the establishment of these dialogues, including our on-going dialogue with Russia.

In the realm of multilateral TCBMs, the United States believes that efforts to adopt space TCBMs should be built from “top down” negotiations, as well as upon “bottom up” initiatives developed by government and private sector satellite operators. The United States is taking a leadership role in the working group of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) on long-term sustainability, which is a key forum for the international development of “best practices guidelines” for orbital debris mitigation and space situational awareness, which are foundational to efforts to pursue TCBMs to enhance stability and security.

Additionally, the United States is considering the European Union’s proposal for a politically binding, international “Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities.” A politically binding international “Code of Conduct” signed by established and emerging space powers can help enumerate best practices, reduce the chance of collisions or other harmful interference with other nation’s activities, and strengthen stability in space. I would highlight, Mr. Chairman, that the United States is already following many of the practices laid out in the current draft of the Code, such as warning of potential orbital collisions, notifying of high-risk re-entry hazards, publishing our national security space policies and strategies, and making pre-launch notification of civil and national security launches.

The United States also looks forward to working with our colleagues in the international community next year in the Group of Government Experts on Outer Space TCBMs established by UN Resolution 65/68. It is our hope that this GGE will serve as a constructive mechanism to examine voluntary and pragmatic TCBMs in space that remedy today’s concrete problems and promote both safe and responsible operations in space. The United States supports full consideration of all relevant proposals for bilateral and multilateral TCBMs, including measures aimed at enhancing the transparency of national security space policies, strategies,
activities and experiments; notifications regarding actual or potential environmental or unintentional manmade hazards to spaceflight safety; and enhanced procedures for international consultations regarding outer space operations in order to prevent incidents in outer space and to prevent or minimize the risks of potentially harmful interference.

Mr. Chairman, the United States once again reaffirms our commitment towards strengthening the stability of the space environment through international cooperation. This in everyone's interest, and can be achieved through pursuing TCBMs that promote responsible behavior and the peaceful use of space. Such cooperation among established and emerging members of the spacefaring community will enhance our common security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.