STATEMENT

By Ambassador Victor Vasiliev
Chairman, Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities

Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure and honor to introduce the Report of the GGE on TCBMs in Outer-Space activities that was adopted by the Group by consensus. This Report is the result of the study by 15 Experts representing Brazil, Chile, China, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Russia. But it is also the result of inputs by many other States which presented their views both in response to the respective GA Resolutions on TCBMs and directly to the GGE, the interaction by the Group with other international Organizations and bodies such as UN COPUOS, ITU, WMO, etc.

The Study was undertaken 20 years after the previous Report of the Secretary-General on this matter and reflects the growing dependence of the mankind on uses of space and dramatic increase in numbers of actors in outer space activities. According to the data, today, there are more than 1,000 operational satellites in orbit, more than 60 States, government consortiums and entities own or operate those assets and more and more States are becoming spacefaring nations or increase their capabilities and resources linked to space.

The Group acknowledged existing international instruments and treaties on outer space containing several TCBMs. At the same time Experts agreed that further measures are needed to address challenges pertaining to outer space activities. In this context the Group noted the work that is underway on several tracks. This includes the debates in the First Committee, consideration by the Conference on Disarmament of the agenda item "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" and introduction of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Treat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects. UN COPUOS established the Working Group on the Long Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities to recommend, i.a. a set of guidelines to enhance the safety and sustainability of outer
space activities. The EU presented a draft of a non-legally binding international code of conduct and held consultations on the proposal. Of note are the initiatives by some States or group of States to introduce policies of not be the first to place weapons in space. The Group appreciated the workings of International and Regional organizations as well as contributions of non-governmental organizations to promote security in outer space.

As an outcome of in-depth three sessions discussions and extensive intersessional work the GGE came up with recommendations that contained a series of measures for outer space activities. The Group agreed that the proposed measures should be of voluntary, non-legally binding character without prejudice to the implementation of those measures that are part of existing obligations by Member States parties to such arrangements.

Specific recommendations contain measures to enhance the transparency of outer space activities i.a. through information exchange on space policies, notifications related to outer space activities and risk reduction, contacts and visits to space launch sites and facilities. They also include coordination and consultative mechanisms aimed at improving interaction between participants in outer space activities and clarifying information and ambiguous situations.

The GGE recommended that stronger coordination and interaction shall be established between participants in outer space activities, including national space agencies, international organizations with specific mandates, as well as commercial operators.

The deliberations in the Group demonstrated that many issues of relevance can be resolved through interaction and dialogue. It was also concluded that the GGE itself served as a good vehicle of confidence. For me personally it was an opportunity to see the diversity of missions (political, technical, scientific) that are being carried out by different Organizations and UN Bodies in addressing space security issues. I came out with a strong conviction that a lot can be achieved if we only achieve synergy between them.

My fellow Experts always stressed that being ambitious we must be realistic if we want this Study to be seriously considered by the UN Member States. With this in
mind we tried to put forward proposals that were practical, implementable, did not undermine sovereign rights or security of States. From that prospective I shall once again stress that the measures contained in the Report are of voluntary nature, many are part of existing instruments.

I will now turn to the conclusions and recommendations by the GGE.

- The GGE encourages States to review and implement the proposed TCBMs through relevant national mechanisms. I call on the delegations in the First Committee and Missions to the UN to bring the Report to the attention of national space authorities and administrations.

- The GGE recommends universal participation in and adherence to the existing legal framework relating to outer space activities. I call on States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing uses of space to consider ratifying or acceding to those treaties.

- The GGE recommends that the General Assembly decides how to further advance TCBMs in Outer Space. I call on the delegations in the First Committee to decide on the appropriate venue or venues for universal consideration and support for the TCBMs. I understand that UN COPUOUS and its respective Working Group will consider the guidelines. The draft resolution on the outcome of the GGE provides for universal consideration of the TSBMs and refers the Recommendations of the Report to the CD. I call on all delegations to support this approach and adopt the resolution by consensus. First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly may also decide to hold joint ad hoc meeting to address challenges to space security and sustainability.

- I shall reiterate the call by the GGE to the UN Secretary-General to circulate the Report to all relevant entities and organizations of the UN system in order that they may assist in effectively implementing its conclusions and recommendations.

Please, allow me to conclude by expressing my deep appreciation to my fellow Experts and Friends who worked as one team and came up with the meaningful consensus result. I also appreciate strong interest in work of the GGE by many States and the NGO community. My warm thanks go to the ODA staff, which served as the Secretariat of the Group, and UNIDIR, which served as consultant to the Group.