EU Statement

By

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Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

2. The European Union and its Member States continue to promote the preservation of a safe and secure space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. The EU recognises the outer space as a global common good, to be used for the benefit of humankind.

3. The EU and its Member States are increasingly important users of outer space. The EU has developed two ambitious Space programmes, Galileo and Copernicus, which complement national space programmes and provide services which can substantially contribute to realising the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. The EU also benefits from other European space programmes of its Member States and the European Space Agency. Furthermore, European space actors increasingly engage in international cooperation to help other countries mobilise space for sustainable development. The new EU Space Strategy has set out Europe’s ambitions in space and confirmed that we want to remain an active and globally engaged partner. Based on the values and principles enshrined in UN treaties, the EU and its Member States will work alongside other Member States to promote and protect the sustainable and peaceful use of space by all nations.

4. The rapid growth in amount of human space-activity, coupled with the increased diversity of space operators, makes it ever more necessary to develop new norms and rules governing human activity in space, as well as enhancing the already existing international law and transparency and confidence building measures. In this context, a commitment by all relevant actors to responsible behaviour is essential.

5. We remain convinced that transparency and confidence-building measures can make an important contribution to the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space. Efforts to pursue political commitments, through a comprehensive approach, dealing with both civil and military aspects of space activities, and as a complement to existing international law, remain relevant. One example is the International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities, proposed originally by the EU in 2008. Such efforts were endorsed by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on TCBMs in outer space,

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
set up by the UN Secretary General in 2011 in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 65/80.

6. In this context, we encourage all States interested in working together to elaborate common principles of responsible behaviour in outer space (PORBOS). Such principles could complement the current international space law and existing initiatives and should be designed in a way that they are agreeable by a vast majority of spacefaring nations.

7. Globally shaped principles of responsible behaviour should increase international cooperation in space, to commit mutually to non-interference in the peaceful access, exploration and use of outer space, to facilitate an equitable access to outer space, and increase transparency in the conduct of space activities. They should address the full range of space activities and related challenges, such as space debris, space traffic management, collision avoidance and prevention of an arms race in outer space, with the related commitment needed for responsible behaviour. In this regard, the EU welcomes the joint meeting of the UN General Assembly First and the Fourth Committee.

8. We strongly support the important work that has been carried out by the COPUOS Working Group on Long Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities. Since the establishment of the Working Group in 2010, we have seen welcome, tangible progress, with the conclusion of negotiations on a first set of guidelines in 2016. The EU and its Member States stand ready to work with all partners to conclude negotiations on the remaining guidelines by the set deadline in June 2018.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The EU remains strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Preventing an arms race in outer space and preventing outer space from becoming an area of conflict are essential for the strengthening of strategic stability and for safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes. Therefore, all 28 EU Member States voted in favour of UN General Assembly Resolution 71/31 regarding the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS).

10. We remain concerned about the continued development of all anti-satellite weapons and capabilities, including terrestrially based, and underline the importance of addressing such developments promptly and as part of international efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

11. We maintain reservations regarding the updated draft on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space
Objects (PPWT). We reiterate our view that a new legally-binding instrument would need to be comprehensive, effective and verifiable.

12. Russia and China have proposed the establishment of a new Group of Governmental Experts to consider elements for a legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space. Given the emphasis placed by EU Member States on non-legally binding confidence building measures, EU Member States regret the fact that Russia and China did not take into consideration their proposals to adjust the draft mandate to allow for a broader discussion on ways to address the security, safety and sustainability of space activity.

13. We are equally concerned that the initiative "No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space" (NFP) does not adequately respond to the objective of strengthening trust and confidence between States and is thus rather increasing the risk of conflict in space. Notably, this initiative does not address the difficult issue of pertinently defining what a weapon in outer space is, which could easily lead a State to mistakenly assess that another State has placed weapons in outer space.

14. We believe that initiatives aiming at preventing an arms race in outer space should contribute to fostering a climate of mutual trust and transparency. We therefore believe political commitments by States to act responsibly in, to and from outer space would be a more effective means of preserving the long-term sustainability of outer space without excluding the possibility that this may one day result in new legally binding norms.

15. The resolution on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures (TCBMs) in Outer Space Activities, which is traditionally co-sponsored by all EU Member States and adopted by consensus, demonstrates the sense of urgency and our shared responsibility to preserve outer space for the peaceful use by all humankind. The EU looks forward to working with all UN Member States in advancing space security and space governance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.