

**Protecting Free Access to Space**  
**Remarks to the U.N.G.A. First Committee**  
October 11, 2006

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Over the past several decades, the use of space has become increasingly important to all aspects of international commerce, peace, and security. The information revolution that has transformed the global economy depends to a very large extent on our collective advances in space, including in the fields of communications, navigation, and remote sensing. The increasing importance of space to both commerce and national security has given rise to a number of concerns around the world, including the potential vulnerability of space systems to disruption from both natural and man-made sources.

The international community needs to recognize, as the United States does, that protection of space access is a key objective. We consider space capabilities to be vital to our national interests, whether these capabilities are in ground or space segments – which include the supporting links of such networks. Space systems should be able to pass through, and operate in, space without interference. It is critical to preserve freedom of action in space, and the United States is committed to ensuring that our freedom of action in space remains unhindered. All countries should share this interest in unfettered access to, and use of, space, and in dissuading or deterring others from impeding either access to, or use of, space for peaceful purposes, or the development of capabilities intended to serve that purpose.

In this spirit, President Bush recently authorized a new National Space Policy that sets forth the guiding principles of U.S. space programs and activities, and is designed to re-energize our efforts to develop and maintain robust and effective space capabilities for civil, commercial, and national security purposes. The United States recognizes the critical importance of space access and use for our economy and our national security. This new policy statement reaffirms our long-standing commitment to ensuring peaceful access to, and use of, space.

Madam Chairman, the modern world relies upon this free right of passage in space. We all should be committed to this right because to lose access to space would have profound consequences for the global economy and our everyday lives. Technology derived from our accomplishments in space touches nearly every aspect of everyday life. From cars to planes, from the farmer's crops to the soldier's battlefield awareness, space technology has had a far-reaching impact on our lives.

These are important principles to bear in mind, Madam Chairman. The danger against which we all must be vigilant is not some theoretical arms race in space, but threats that would deny peaceful access to, and use of, space – especially ground-based space-denial capabilities intended to impede the free access to, and use of, space systems and services.

Because any satellite capable of maneuvering can be used to destroy another satellite simply by physical collision, space does not lend itself to an old-style, "arms control" approach. In fact, such an approach could be counterproductive if it created restrictions upon free access to space and eroded the important principles of free transit and operations in space.

For these reasons, Madam Chairman, the United States opposes proposed negotiations on the so-called Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Indeed, the international community should oppose – and the United States will oppose – the development of new legal regimes or other restrictions that seek to prohibit or limit access to, or use of, space.

Our views on this matter are clear and easily summarized. One: there is no arms race in space. Two: there is no prospect of an arms race in space. Three: the United States will continue to protect its access to, and use of, space.

Madam Chairman, the international community must recognize and act upon its vital interest in preserving free access to, and use of, this crucial medium. Yet, our cooperation should not be limited to

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opposing restrictions on free access to, and use of, space. We also should continue to work together to advance international space cooperation to improve the global community's use of space.

The United States already has a number of efforts under way to help safeguard and improve peaceful uses of outer space for all. For example, the United States provides information on objects in space through a public domain website. We have led the way in negotiating guidelines for mitigating the dangers to space operations presented by orbital debris. We also have extended assistance to other space-faring nations by offering help in collision-avoidance, such as during China's first two manned space launches. In addition, in order to help avoid the damaging effects that solar weather can have upon radio-frequency communications, we provide free information to everyone through a website of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on solar radiation storms and radio blackouts.

These, Madam Chairman, are just a few examples of what the United States is doing to help make space safer and more productive for all states. The international community should follow the United States' example and explore more ways to cooperate. Our new National Space Policy recognizes the importance of international cooperation, and continues to emphasize its importance.

In fact, this is the core of the United States National Space Policy. We recognize our vital national interest in unhindered access to, and use of, space, and we are firmly committed to protecting it. At the same time, we remain dedicated to improving the ways in which all states can benefit from this invaluable medium of space in service of economic development, scientific advancement, and international peace and security.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.