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Conference on Disarmament

Statement by

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to the Conference on Disarmament
on behalf of the European Union**

Statement on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space

Geneva, 13 February 2007

(Check against delivery)

EU Statement on PAROS

Madame President,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.
2. At the outset, Madame President, allow me to congratulate Ambassador Meyer of Canada and Ambassador da Rocha Paranhos of Brazil on the assumption of the post as Coordinators, for Item 3 and Item 4 of our agenda, respectively. The EU would like to assure you, Madame President, as well as all Coordinators, of our full support in your efforts to guide and lead our work.
3. The EU and its Member States are conscious of the growing involvement of the international community in outer space activities for development and progress, and of the increasing dependence on outer space for their economic and industrial development as well as their security. We are also actively co-operating in various space initiatives. Such activities should be developed in a peaceful environment: an arms race in outer space must be prevented. Such prevention is an essential condition for the strengthening of international security and for the promotion of international cooperation in the free exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes by all States. The more the international community is dependent on outer space for its economic and scientific development and security the more important it is to operate in a safe and secure space environment.
4. 50 years ago, in 1957, the space age dawned with the Soviet satellite Sputnik.
5. This year, in the year of its 40th anniversary, we recall in particular the 1967 Treaty on the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and other Celestial Bodies (generally known as the Outer Space Treaty), which declares the use of outer space to be the province of all mankind - thus the global commons not subject to claims of national sovereignty.
6. The 1979 Treaty on principles governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of outer space including the Moon and other Celestial Bodies (generally known as the Moon Treaty) is another major international treaty on the peaceful uses of outer space.
7. Existing arms control agreements and previous such agreements touch outer space, in part like the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty of 1996, the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems of 1972, the SALT I and II agreements of 1972 and 1979 and the FNMOT Treaty of 1977.
8. Other measures relate to the use of space which could be termed Confidence Building Measures, like the Registration Convention of 1976, or to liability for space activities - the Liability Convention of 1976 - or cooperation like the Rescue Agreement of 1968.
9. In the CD we recognize a growing convergence of views on the elaboration of measures to strengthen transparency, confidence and security in the peaceful uses of outer space.

10. We also would like to recall that the EU countries unanimously voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly Resolutions on Transparency and Confidence Building Measures in Outer Space Activities and on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space in the 61st UN General Assembly.
11. We appreciated the careful consideration of the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) in 2006 by the Conference on Disarmament. This includes the valuable compilation (CD/INF.50) of basic documents prepared by the CD Secretariat containing documents since 1984.
12. The EU therefore appreciates the attention given so far by the CD to PAROS and the P6 decision to task a coordinator for our work in the CD in 2007. We pledge to Ambassador Meyer our full support and place great confidence in his abilities and dexterity.
13. We would like to thank UNIDIR, and in particular Mme. Patricia Lewis, for their consistent and tireless efforts as regards this issue over many years.
14. The risk represented by "space debris" for the operability of all space activities is an additional source for concern. From this point of view, the activity of the Committee for the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (COPUOS), including on "space debris", seems relevant for the CD deliberations. Some form of interaction between the work in the CD and COPUOS would therefore be desirable. In this connection, we suggest to consider the possibility of inviting the Chairman of the Committee to brief us on questions relevant to our work, including the issue of space debris at the appropriate time.
15. As outlined in its statement in the opening session of the CD on 24 January 2007, the EU is very concerned about the recent test of an anti-satellite weapon.
16. The EU stands ready to explore in a substantial manner the possibilities of preventing an arms race in outer space. The recent test of an anti satellite weapon should serve as a wake up call in this regard and remind us of the urgency of the matter and our responsibility to act.
17. We should perhaps not be overambitious as to what is achievable in the short term. A sense of realism is called for. However it would be irresponsible to block the further discussion on this agenda item for fear of too ambitious goals to be pursued.
18. More than ever a sense of proportion and a sense of responsibility are called for. A gradual and progressive approach is possible. The adoption of measures of transparency and confidence building, as conducive towards the prevention of an arms race in outer space, could be discussed.
19. Any confidence-building measures could among others be based on the principle of non-interference with non-aggressive activities in space and drawing up a "code of conduct" and "rules of behaviour" or "rules of the road" in space. Elements drawn up might include the avoidance of collisions or interference; minimum distances between satellites placed in the same orbit. Avoiding collisions, avoidance of dangerous maneuvers and debris mitigation could be among other issues, that warrant further evaluation and discussion.
20. Discipline in the launching of objects into space is fundamental in space security. In this context, the EU would also like to underline the relevance of the Hague International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and the need for its universalisation.
21. I thank you very much.