Mr President,

May I start by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference. You can be assured of Australia’s support.

Mr President,

Along with other nations, Australia has become increasingly reliant on space for services critical to our social, environmental and economic well-being, as well as our security.

Australia thus shares with other States an abiding interest in ensuring the sustainability of the space environment for current and future generations. This common interest is best served by a rules-based approach to space which promotes the peaceful, safe and responsible use of the space environment.

Various work streams are currently underway, in the United Nations and elsewhere, to enhance space security. These include: the work of the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures (TCBMs) in Outer Space Activities to develop space TCBMs; work in the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on sustainability; and the work towards an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities to address responsible behaviour in space, and in particular the pressing problem of space debris. Australia sees these as complementary approaches, each making a valuable contribution to space security.

Australia has supported the work of the UN GGE on TCBMs by providing a paper on the application of international law to international security issues in space. The paper suggests that there are a number of obligations and principles of existing international law which may be applied to the activities of States in outer space, in addition to the provisions of the five so-called ‘space treaties’.

In particular, it highlights that there are a series of obligations in existing international law constraining actions by States which would contaminate the environment and/or interfere with the activities of other States. These obligations could also be applied to State actions in outer space, including the creation of long-lived space debris through the deliberate destruction of space objects.
Clarifying the application of international law increases transparency, contributing to confidence in the international system, and provides a useful basis for the further development of TCBMs.

Mr President,

Proliferating space debris poses an immediate danger to satellites and space-based infrastructure. Given the critical importance of this infrastructure to the normal functioning of our daily lives, preventing further proliferation should be a priority for international action. The inevitable proliferation of debris in the congested space environment, through collision of orbiting objects, should not be compounded by further deliberate creation of debris. In particular, the development and testing of kinetic anti-satellite weapons is a concern.

Australia therefore regards the proposed *International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities* as an appropriate means to focus international attention on addressing this problem, and to formalise expectations against the deliberate creation of debris. To this end, Australia expressed early support for the concept of the Code, as proposed by the European Union, and has been actively working with the EU and others to take forward the initiative. We encourage all States to engage constructively in the forthcoming round of ‘Open-ended Consultations’ announced by our EU colleagues, to ensure States’ own interests – and our shared interests – in a safe and secure space environment are protected.

Mr President,

Space is a global resource upon which all states increasingly depend, and as such, all countries have an interest in maintaining the safety and security of space. To stimulate greater involvement in this important work, Australia and Vietnam recently co-hosted a Space Security Workshop under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The Workshop successfully brought together ARF participants to discuss challenges to space security, and participants recommended that the ARF consider continuing to be engaged on this important issue.

Similarly, space security is enhanced through the development of space situational awareness capabilities. An understanding of the space environment, including its characteristics, conditions, and space events, enhances planning and coordination, and can facilitate avoidance of collisions between satellites and with debris. Australia is working towards contributing southern hemisphere data to enhance global space situational awareness.

Mr President,

Australia notes the space arms control treaty proposal tabled in the Conference. While Australia is open to discussing space arms control proposals that are practical, enforceable and which effectively address pressing challenges, we continue to see substantial obstacles to taking that proposal forward, relating to definition, scope and verifiability.
Australia considers that, in contrast, early and effective action can be taken to help address the common problem of space debris. The international community already shares an understanding of the need to protect the security of space objects and infrastructure. The proposed *International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities* offers a straightforward means for action. Australia urges States to seize this opportunity to make a substantive contribution to space security by engaging constructively on the Code.

I thank you, Mr President.