Statement by H.E. Ambassador Wu Haitao of the Chinese Delegation at the Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, on PAROS

March 19, 2013, Geneva
Mr. President,

First of all, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament (CD). Your rich diplomatic experience and wisdom will surely guide our efforts to seek positive progress in the CD. You can count on the active support and cooperation of the Chinese delegation in your endeavours. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciations to the previous President, Ambassador Mehta of India, for her efforts to push forward the work of the CD.

Mr. President,

The Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) is a core issue on the CD’s agenda and it involves an important aspect of the maintenance of international peace and security. The 67th UNGA once again adopted by overwhelming majority resolution 67/30 on PAROS, reiterating the importance and urgency of the PAROS and the primary role played by the CD in the negotiation of an international instrument in this aspect. That resolution has thus given adequate reflection to the common aspiration of the international community to maintain security in outer space.

Since last year, the international efforts to address the issue of space security have been pursued along different tracks: Thematic discussions on PAROS were carried out in the CD, which provided opportunities for all delegations to have in-depth exchange of views on threats to space security and possible approaches to prevent an arms race in outer space. For its part, the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space (TCMBs) conducted its work in an orderly fashion and its second meeting will be held in Geneva soon. Meanwhile, discussions on the EU Code of Conduct are also under way.

Mr. President,

China always advocates the peaceful use of outer space and opposes the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. To that end, we have been working actively to promote negotiations to conclude an international legal instrument in this regard. I would like to take this opportunity to share some of my views on ways to effectively maintain the security of outer space.

Firstly, the fundamental threat to the security of outer space comes first and foremost from the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. In fact, outer space is not only an important platform for the development and prosperity of mankind, but is also viewed as a new frontier with important strategic security implications. Along with the development of science and technology and increased utilization of space by mankind, the risk of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space is on the rise, posing threats to the security of outer space and undermining the global strategic balance and stability as well as the overall
international nuclear disarmament process.

It should be pointed out that focusing selectively on the impact of development-related issues such as space debris on the space security while ignoring or neglecting the risks of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, is actually evading the primary threats in the outer space today. Such an approach will neither be conducive to promoting the efforts of international community to maintain space security, nor bring genuine security to outer space.

Secondly, we believe that the fundamental approach to maintain space security is to negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument in this regard. We should lose no time in adopting effective preventive measures by negotiating and concluding an international legal instrument on PAROS to close the loopholes in the existing outer space legal regime and to fundamentally prevent the weaponization of outer space by means of a legal framework.

The draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT, CD/1839) introduced by China and Russia in 2008 is the most mature proposal so far presented to the CD on PAROS. In 2009, in response to relevant comments and questions, China and Russia jointly submitted a working paper entitled Principal Questions and Comments on the Draft PPWT (CD/1872) with further explanations and clarifications on matters of concern to some delegations relating to the definition, scope and verification. The PPWT is an open process that has incorporated the opinions and suggestions of the CD members. We welcome further inputs for improving and perfecting the draft. And we are looking forward to start as early as possible substantive discussions on PAROS in the CD and begin the negotiations on the basis of the draft PPWT.

Thirdly, the TCMBs are useful supplements to the PAROS. Appropriate and practical TCBMs can play a positive role in enhancing mutual-trust, reducing misjudgments and regulating space activities. China has actively participated in the work of the GGE on TCBMs in the hope of achieving substantial results. China also attended the relevant discussions on the EU Code of Conduct and we expect the EU to fully take on board the advice from all parties, especially from the developing countries.

In our view, voluntary TCBMs by themselves can not help us reaching the objective of PAROS or offer any fundamental guarantee for the peace and security of outer space. Therefore, discussions on that subject should not undermine the work to be carried out in the CD on the basis of the draft PPWT. The two should complement each other and jointly contribute to enhancing space security.

Thank you, Mr. President.