
Conference on Disarmament

9 September 2013

Original: English

Bangladesh on behalf of member States of G-21

Working paper

Prevention of an arms race in outer space

1. The Group of 21 believes that space technology has indeed become an indispensable and integral part of our daily lives. Never before have information, communication, banking, economic transactions, navigation, and even political and strategic decision-making been so dependent on space-based technologies, which are themselves witnessing rapid growth.
2. The Group reiterates that outer space and other celestial bodies are the common heritage of humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for the benefit and interest of all humankind in a spirit of cooperation. The Group reaffirms that the exploration and use of outer space and other celestial bodies shall be for peaceful purposes only and shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.
3. The Group stresses that the growing use of outer space increases the need for greater transparency, confidence building measures and better information on the part of the international community. The Group believes that all States with major space capabilities have a special responsibility to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. All States should refrain from actions contrary to that objective and to the relevant existing treaties in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation.
4. The Group recognizes that the prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger for international peace and security. The Group emphasizes the necessity of further measures with appropriate and effective verification provisions to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.
5. The Group emphasizes the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space. In this regard, the Group is deeply concerned over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile defense systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space which have, inter alia, contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security.

6. The Group stresses that all countries bear a responsibility to refrain from activities that could jeopardize the collective goal of maintaining outer space free from weapons of mass destruction and all other forms of weaponization so as to ensure that its benefits are available to all.

7. The Group considers that the multilateral disarmament agreements provide mechanisms for States Parties to consult one another and to cooperate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective of, or in the application of, the provisions of the agreements, and that such consultations and cooperation may also be undertaken through appropriate international procedures within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

8. The prevention of an arms race in outer space has assumed greater urgency because of legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter further militarization of outer space, or prevent its weaponization. The Group further reaffirms its recognition that the legal regime applicable to outer space does not in and of itself guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space. For that purpose, the Group stresses the need to consolidate and reinforce that regime and enhance its effectiveness.

9. In this regard, the Group reaffirms that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, which has the primary role in substantive negotiations on priority questions of disarmament. The Group considers that the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations on matters related to the "Prevention of an arms race in outer space".

10. In addition, resolution 67/30 of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" further made the following observations with regard to the Conference on Disarmament:

(a) The Conference on Disarmament has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects;

(b) The Conference on Disarmament should establish a working group under its agenda item entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" as early as possible during its 2013 session.

11. The Group of 21 takes note of the completion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and the adoption of a study on outer space transparency and confidence-building measures as requested by resolution 65/68 of the General Assembly of the United Nations on "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.", which will be submitted to sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Group, while stressing the priority of negotiation of legally binding instruments on strengthening the international legal regime on outer space, recognizes that global and inclusive transparency and confidence building measures, arrived at through broad international consultations, could be important complementary measures.

12. The Group welcomes the joint Russian Federation-Chinese initiative of a draft treaty on the "Prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects" presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to the Conference on Disarmament on 12 February 2008. This initiative is a constructive contribution to the work of the Conference, and is a good basis for further discussion toward adopting an international binding instrument.