



# General Assembly

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**Open-ended working group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours**

**Geneva, 9–13 May 2022**

Item 6 of the agenda

**Consideration of issues contained in paragraph 5  
of General Assembly resolution A/RES/76/231**

## **Document prepared by the Russian Federation in connection with the open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/231 on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours**

**Submitted by the Russian Federation**

1. The Russian Federation notes the risks of outer space becoming a launching pad for aggression and war, which in recent times have become very real. We are concerned that a number of the States Members of the United Nations are working towards the placement of weapons in outer space and the use of outer space for military purposes in order to ensure dominance and supremacy. Ambitious programmes are being implemented to develop weapons systems designed for the threat or use of force in, from or against outer space.
2. Such actions are detrimental to international peace and security and could result in severe instability and an arms race in outer space, which would completely undermine the prospects for arms limitation and reduction in general. In this regard, we view as unacceptable any attempt to turn outer space into a new frontier of competition and conflict among States.
3. In the light of these trends, according to the 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, the intention to place weapons in outer space is the main external military risk, and the disruption of the functioning of systems for the monitoring of outer space is a military threat.
4. Military risk is understood as a state of relations between or within States characterized by a combination of factors that, under certain circumstances, could lead to the emergence of a military threat. Military threat is defined as a state of relations between or within States characterized by a real possibility of military conflict between opposing sides and a high degree of readiness of a given State (or group of States) or separatist (terrorist) organizations to use military force (armed violence).

5. Given this assessment of the threats and risks in the context of outer space, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are entrusted with outer space-related tasks in the interests of national defence and security: providing timely warning of aerospace attacks; ensuring readiness to repel aerospace attacks; deploying and maintaining an array of spacecraft in orbit in the strategic outer space zone to support the activities of the Russian Armed Forces; and improving the aerospace defence system. The actions of Russia in outer space are non-confrontational in character and are carried out in strict compliance with international law,



including the basic 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty).

6. In this context, we consider that, to ensure that the activities of the working group are as effective as possible, its efforts must be focused on preventing an arms race in outer space and preserving outer space for peaceful purposes. Given the continued relevance of the task of preventing an arms race in outer space, the consideration by the working group of the applicability of international humanitarian law and the right of self-defence to outer space seems divorced from reality and out of step with the very aim of preventing an arms race in outer space.

7. In this regard, we must reaffirm our commitment to the decisions of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978 with the aim of ensuring the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, preventing an arms race in outer space and launching relevant negotiations in accordance with the Outer Space Treaty. It is essential in particular to reaffirm existing international legal norms and principles governing outer space activities. These are the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, the 1963 Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, the 1972 Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects, the 1974 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space and the 1977 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques.

8. It is generally recognized that, while the existing international treaties related to outer space and the legal regime provided for therein play a positive role in regulating outer space activities, they are unable to fully prevent an arms race in outer space, the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force in, from or against outer space and to fully preserve outer space for peaceful purposes.

9. In this regard, there is a need to reinforce this regime. Without reliable guarantees for keeping outer space free of weapons, enshrined in a legally binding international instrument, it is futile to address issues relating to the peaceful use of outer space and the safety of outer space activities.

10. At the national and international levels, Member States should commit to the complete exclusion of outer space from the arms race and the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all humankind. In particular, no weapons of any kind should be placed in outer space (including in orbit around the Earth and on celestial bodies), the threat or use of force against or with space objects should be prohibited, and a complete and comprehensive ban on strike weapons in outer space for use against space objects should be introduced.

11. Specifically, such an approach entails the following commitments on the part of Member States:

- Not to use space objects as weapons against any targets on Earth, in the air or in outer space
- Not to construct, test or deploy weapons in outer space for any purpose, including for missile defence, as anti-satellite capabilities or for use against targets on Earth or in the air, and to eliminate any such systems already in the possession of States
- Not to construct, test, deploy or use space weapons for missile defence, as anti-satellite capabilities or for use against targets on Earth or in the air
- Not to destroy, damage, disrupt or alter the trajectory of the space objects of other States
- Not to assist other States, groups of States or international, intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, including non-governmental entities established, incorporated or located in territory under their jurisdiction and/or control, in engaging in the above-mentioned activities and not to encourage them to do so

12. Work must begin without delay on the elaboration of a legally binding international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes that provides for a prohibition on the placement of any type of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force in, from or against outer space. The Russian-Chinese draft treaty on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against space objects could serve as the basis for such a document.

13. The Russian Federation recognizes the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures as an integral element of a legally binding international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. These are the measures that will ensure, inter alia, the resolution of disputes arising from the implementation of the future treaty.

14. Pending the elaboration of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency and confidence-building measures can serve as an interim solution to provide predictability in relation to outer space activities. The transparency and confidence-building measures should be aimed at ensuring a total ban on the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against or with space objects. They should complement, but not substitute for, effective legally binding instruments on outer space activities.

15. The Russian Federation sees merit in putting the transparency and confidence-building measures recommended by the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities into practice at the national and international levels.<sup>1</sup> We support their implementation at the national level, to the greatest extent feasible and practicable, on a voluntary basis and in a manner consistent with the interests of Member States.

16. For the purposes of maintaining international peace, ensuring equal and indivisible security for all and increasing the predictability and sustainability of the activities of States in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, the “No first placement of weapons in outer space” international initiative/political commitment remains essential. The initiative has 30 full-fledged participants among Member States.<sup>2</sup>

17. The initiative is a transparency and confidence-building measure of unprecedented importance. It also represents a key step towards a treaty on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against space objects and cannot be viewed in isolation from the efforts of the international community to prevent an arms race in outer space in accordance with the General Assembly resolution on prevention of an arms race in outer space. The General Assembly’s widely supported annual resolutions on no first placement of weapons in outer space and transparency and confidence-building measures show that most Member States agree with the approach of the Russian Federation to those issues.

18. The Russian Federation recalls that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has a broad mandate. A good number of the issues being considered by the open-ended working group, including that of space debris, are under discussion in the Committee’s Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities and may eventually result in additional guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. In this connection, we consider that such disregard for the competence of the Committee in decision-making on outer space activities is unacceptable and could undermine its specific role as set out in the decisions of the General Assembly.

19. We consider that the Committee’s current Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines are sufficient to regulate this issue. Characterizing space debris as the most significant threat to the space environment does not reflect the true state of affairs. We are in favour of a ban on

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<sup>1</sup> A/68/189.

<sup>2</sup> Argentina, Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Congo, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Viet Nam.

any interference with a space object belonging to another State unless that State has given its consent for such actions.

20. The Russian Federation expects the open-ended working group to achieve results that further the goals of preventing an arms race in outer space and elaborating a legally binding multilateral instrument on prevention of an arms race in outer space containing guarantees for the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against space objects.

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