



Permanent Mission of Italy
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Outer space

Statement by Mr. Tancredi Francese, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament

New York, 26 October 2022

Mister Chair,

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy is historically engaged in actively improving space security and is strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, an essential goal for strengthening international security and stability and for safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis.

With the New-Space paradigm and current and expected technological developments, the space domain is becoming more complex. Depending on the area of space in which activities take place, security in space is gradually becoming more linked to economic and social stability on Earth and increasingly critical to ensuring that future space exploration and exploitation activities are conducted in the most balanced way possible.

The current strategic space environment appears increasingly congested, contested and competitive. The development and proliferation of new dual-use technologies, capabilities and systems have blurred the line between military and civil use, making it more complicated to protect and defend space assets and identify threats. For this reason, security from and in space no longer appears to be a purely military and national issue, but rather a multi-sectoral and global issue that needs to be addressed at the international level with the broadest engagement of all UN Member States, international organizations, commercial actors and civil society representatives.

Therefore, we emphasize the need to ensure the peaceful use of outer space and to address potential escalation dynamics and the security threats these may pose. We feel a sense of urgency in this regard.

Mister Chair,

Potentially hostile activities are on the rise and increasingly affect the stability and security of outer space. Space debris management, the possible effects of the deployment of large constellations on the orbital debris environment, the possible risks imposed on space missions by new applications, and emerging threats to the security and resilience of orbital infrastructures require heightened attention.

Hybrid space operations span an increasing number of sectors, adding an extra layer of complexity to risk and threat assessments, and areas of potential regulation. Threats more closely related to potentially hostile behaviour include the use of electronic warfare to overwhelm satellites and compromise their operation or use of laser beams to damage optical sensors.

Some issues need to be addressed with particular urgency, such as the persistent development or testing of anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles. Such activities are of great concern, also because they create long-lasting debris clouds, compromising the security of outer space activities. In this regard, we welcome the commitment made by the United States and several other States not to conduct destructive tests of direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles.

Mister Chair,

We recognize the invaluable role played by the legal framework governing space activities in consolidating a legal regime to promote the use of outer space and strengthen international cooperation in space activities. The 1967 Treaty on the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space is the cornerstone, and its universalization and effective implementation should remain a priority. At the same time, we must recognize the pace at which space activities are developing and diversifying. While new opportunities are opening up, we are also collectively confronted with the challenging task of ensuring that outer space remains an operationally stable and safe environment.

Italy therefore believes that norms, rules and principle of responsible behaviours should be elaborated and put in place in order to promote security, safety and sustainability in outer space and to safeguard the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes.

In this regard, Italy fully supports the activities of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) pursuant to UNGA Resolution 76/231 aiming at reaching a common understanding of how best to act to reduce threats to space systems in order to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment, free from an arms race and conflict, for the benefit of all. Italy believes that the OEWG can pave the way for constructively addressing these challenges through the adoption of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour.

Italy also emphasizes the importance of the work by the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) on the implementation of the 21 Guidelines for the Long Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Activities, and continues to be firmly committed to the long-term sustainability, safety and security of the outer space.

To conclude, Mister Chair,

We are convinced that it is important to develop initiatives aimed at increasing confidence and mutual trust between current and future space actors. We remain committed to actively and constructively engaging for the advancement of space security and space governance.

Thank you, Mister Chair.