

STATEMENT

By Ambassador Victor Vasiliev
Chairman, Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building
Measures in Outer Space Activities (2012-2013).
At the Conference on Disarmament
May 9, 2022

Mr.Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Let me share with you some results of the Study on TCBMs in Outer-Space activities that was undertaken by the Group of Governmental experts in 2012-2013, as well as my observations. When the GGE got together for the first meeting almost 10 years ago in July 2012, we had very mixed feelings on how to move forward. The GGE Experts came with different expertise – diplomatic, military, scientific, legal – representing countries with contrasting space interests and experience. But it took us only a couple of meetings to arrive at the first conclusion: ultimate goal of space security and sustainability could only be achieved through synergy and interaction between various actors. Though the Report was the “product” of 15 Experts representing Brazil, Chile, China, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Russia, it was also the result of inputs by many other States which presented their views both in response to the respective GA Resolutions on TCBMs or directly to the GGE, the interaction by the Group with other International Organizations and bodies such as UN COPUOS, ITU, WMO, etc. On several occasions, I also briefed the CD on the deliberations at the GGE and received responses from some delegations as well as from the NGOs that were considered by the Group.

Though the Study was undertaken 20 years after the previous Report of the UN Secretary-General on this matter (1990-1993) it reflected the growing dependence of the mankind on uses of space, dramatic increase in numbers of actors in outer space activities as well as the new environment. Recent years only confirmed this trend and now we are facing new challenges, such as strong private sector presence. However, does it mean that we need to start from scratch?

My answer is no. Much is in place already. Starting with the instruments and treaties on outer space containing several TCBMs: Outer Space Treaty of 1967, Rescue

Agreement of 1968, Liability Convention of 1972, Registration convention of 1976 and Moon Treaty of 1984. There are several other both international and bilateral agreements among spacefaring nations on exchanges of information. Organizations like ITU, WMO maintain procedures to regulate their spectrum of space assets. At the same time, Experts agreed that there were lacunas in the existing mechanisms and further measures are needed to address challenges pertaining to outer space activities.

As an outcome of three sessions discussions and extensive inter session work the GGE came up with the Report that contained both the overview of the general characteristics and basic principles of outer space TCBMs as well as the series of measures to enhance them (A/68/189 of 29 July 2013). The Report was later approved by UNGA Resolution 68/50 by consensus – the first consensus reached on this issue in decades. Let me remind you of the basics.

- The GGE identified categories of and criteria for TCBMs.
- The Group agreed that the proposed measures should be of voluntary, non-legally binding character without prejudice to the implementation of those measures that are part of existing obligations by Member States parties to such arrangements.
- TCBMs can not serve as the substitution to the legally binding arrangement and States shall consider their accession to all relevant arrangements.

The Report contained specific recommendations to enhance the transparency of outer space activities. These include:

- Information exchange on space policies, the principles and goals of a State's outer space policy, on major military outer space expenditures and other national security space activities. And here I see the unique role of the CD and other UN bodies – First Committee and UNDC
- Information exchange and notifications such as on orbital parameters of outer space objects and potential orbital conjunctions, on forecast natural hazards in outer space and spacecraft launches.
- Risk reduction notifications, including on scheduled maneuvers, uncontrolled high-risk re-entry events, other emergency situations and of intentional orbital break-ups.

An important confidence building measure - contacts and visits to space launch sites and facilities.

The GGE recommended that stronger coordination and interaction shall be established between participants in outer space activities, including national space agencies, international organizations with specific mandates, as well as commercial operators.

The GGE also acknowledged that being ambitious we must be realistic. With this in mind we tried to put forward proposals that were practical, implementable, did not undermine sovereign rights or security of States. From that prospective I shall once again stress that the measures proposed in the Report are of voluntary nature, or are part of existing instruments.

Of course, the main question after all Studies and GGEs – what is next? When our Group was working on the recommendations, we also had doubts whether the Report would serve its purpose or would be just another file in the archive?

The ongoing developments to promote space security and sustainability and, of course, holding of Today's meeting proves that we were on the right track. And I believe that the GGE Report will be helpful for your considerations.

Another important task is to make all arrangements effecting space security and sustainability universal and insure their strict observance and implementation. The General Assembly shall call upon States that have not yet become members to the international treaties governing the use of outer space to consider ratifying or acceding to those treaties and arrangements. This call may also be originated by the CD.

When I briefed the Joint ad hoc meetings of the First and the Forth Committees of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in October 2015 I concluded by comparing the task of achieving space security with a puzzle. As you are aware, there are many fragments of the puzzle – big and small – but without a single element the picture is incomplete. Whether TCBM's is a fragment of a puzzle or rather, a background for a whole picture that is for you to answer.

Thank you.