



Statement by Ambassador ICHIKAWA Tomiko
Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament
Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, 28 March 2024

Thematic discussion on Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space

Mr. President,

The importance of outer space is significantly increasing. Its use involves every aspect of our lives and societies. As space actors and activities increase and evolve, it is in our common interest to maintain and ensure the security, stability, and sustainability of outer space activities. Therefore, advancing rule-making on space security is an urgent task for all. Japan supports our common efforts for preventing an arms race in outer space (PAROS) in all its aspects as its unwavering fundamental position.

Mr. President,

Concerning rule-making on PAROS, Japan underscores the need to establish a common understanding on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, for the following reasons.

First, the dual-use nature of space objects brings complexity to defining a weapon in outer space. Such nature also poses difficult challenges to identifying space threats through focusing solely on objects or technological capabilities. In order to address security challenges in outer space, it is crucial instead to focus on how certain objects or capabilities are applied and used. This behaviour-based approach presents great merit, since behaviours can be more easily observed even in outer space.

Second, Japan believes that developing norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours will contribute to enhancing security in outer space. This is because they can mitigate threats including those occurring from misunderstanding and miscalculation which could increase tension and even lead to a conflict.

In this context, Japan highly values the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours that conducted its work from 2022 to 2023. The discussions at this OEWG have contributed to deepening understanding among stakeholders on space security issues.

Japan strongly supports the continuation of the work of this OEWG in 2025 and 2026. We look forward to deepening our discussions on potential norms of responsible behaviours at the OEWG, which can be a basis for the elements of a possible legally binding instrument in the future.

Mr. President,

Japan has been also actively participating in the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on further practical measures for preventing an arms race in outer space since November last year. We welcome the intersessional meeting as an important opportunity to share views among all UN Member States as well as with non-governmental entities. We hope that the final report, which will be produced at the second session of the GGE this August, will reflect the wide range of views to inform future deliberations on PAROS.

Mr. President,

Despite the confrontational environment at the time of the Cold War, the international community established legal frameworks to ensure the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space. They included prohibition of placing nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. Today, more than ever, Japan firmly believes that outer space must remain a domain free of nuclear weapons. It is our common responsibility to fully comply with the existing legal frameworks, including the Outer Space Treaty.

In this connection, as a member of the UN Security Council, Japan, together with the United States, put forward a draft UN Security Council resolution, reaffirming the fundamental obligations that parties have under the Outer Space Treaty.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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