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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF JAPAN

AT THE MEETING OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
74TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
-THEMATIC DEBATE: OUTER SPACE -
29 OCTOBER 2019

Mr. Chair,

The environment of outer space has been rapidly changing with an influx of new actors and a diversification of activities. The large constellations of satellites in low Earth orbit (LEO) will increase orbital traffic significantly. A growing number of commercial actors are preparing to enter the field of on-orbit servicing as space debris removal. We will experience more innovative technologies, some of which could be disruptive, in the near future. The distinction between civil, commercial activities and military activities has blurred. In this changing environment, the international community needs to bring new ideas and a new approach to our discussions going forward.

Mr. Chair,

Japan supports in principle the idea of preventing an arms race in outer space. We have participated in substantive discussions on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) as well as in the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE). The CD has discussed the issue since 1985, but the recent result of the GGE shows that there still are divergent views on the issue among states.

Mr. Chair,

TCBMs are pragmatic and near-term measures to increase trust and prevent mistrust, misperception or miscalculations in space activities among states. We believe that the significance of TCBMs needs to be reaffirmed.

In this regard, Japan welcomes the adoption of the Guidelines on Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (LTS guidelines) at the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). Japan encourages all member states to implement the LTS guidelines as appropriate.

However, the international community is still in the process of developing TCBMs that can encompass civil, commercial and military aspects. Among the TCBMs contained in the recommendations of the 2013 Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) Report, which measures are effective in terms of the goal of PAROS. The UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) can explore such question. This will help states deepen mutual understanding on threats and risks to space activities and on what could be acceptable parameters for responsible space activities.

Mr. Chair,

Due to the dual use nature of space objects, it is inherently difficult to define what a weapon in outer space is. It is also difficult to know and verify intentions behind certain outer space activities. Therefore, we reiterate the need to voluntarily implement principles of responsible behavior. The implementation of these principles can build up operational best practices of what is responsible behavior in outer space. We believe that this approach could be practical step for future multilateral rule-making in outer space, and could prove relatively durable in the face of changing circumstances.

Mr. Chair,

In closing, I would like to re-emphasize our commitment to ensure the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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