

Statement by Norway on outer space (Cluster III)

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Chair,

Space-based systems are essential for communications, positioning, navigation and timing, situational awareness, and more. Therefore, it remains essential to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable, secure and sustainable environment for the benefit of all.

It is crucial that all states remain committed to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space and refrain from conducting activities contrary to their obligations under international law. That includes activities that could threaten the ability of all States to freely use and explore outer space, now and in the future.

The deliberations of this committee on preventing an arms race in outer space (PAROS) form an important contribution to this end. PAROS is discussed in the context of our larger aims of contributing to international security and disarmament. As such, the aims of our discussions are to contribute to international security related to space and to improving space security-

To this end, the OEWG on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours was an important contribution. While the issues discussed in the group have linkages to those discussed in the Fourth Committee, on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, they are also clearly distinguished and should be discussed here.

Norway regrets that the group could not adopt a substantive report despite the great efforts of many to achieve consensus against the stalwart opposition of very few. Nonetheless, the broad engagement of states, along with the dynamic and substantive discussions in this working group, attest to the importance of continuing the efforts to reduce space threats. The work should be continued in a new OEWG with a focused mandate as proposed in the draft resolution by the United Kingdom.

The behaviour-based approach continues to offer a way forward towards a legally binding instrument, political commitments or both. To Norway, form is secondary to the objective of reducing threats.

Chair,

It has long been agreed among states that international law, including the UN Charter, applies to the conduct of states in outer space. It is obvious that in the case of armed conflict related to outer space, this would include international humanitarian law. Recognizing the applicability of humanitarian law is, as has been noted by the ICRC, not

to legitimize the use of force in outer space nor its militarization or weaponization. The UN charter obligates states to refrain from the threat or use of force against another state. The applicability of international humanitarian law does not diminish this obligation either in space or on Earth.

Transparency and confidence-building mechanisms contribute to reducing tensions and promoting a more secure outer space environment. The report of the 2013 group of governmental experts on transparency and confidence-building measures was an important contribution on this issue. Norway welcomes the report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission Working Group II on promoting their practical implementation.

The Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation is an important transparency and confidence-building measure. Norway strongly supports the universalization of the code. We call on its subscribers to implement its provisions and provide pre-launch notifications.

Norway is also pleased to have supported the commitment not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. This is a commitment fit to contribute to confidence-building.

Chair,

As the importance of outer space continues to increase, so does the importance of maintaining its security. Norway remains a steadfast proponent of seeking multilateral solutions to global challenges, including for a more secure outer space environment. There is a growing risk related to outer space security that states must resolve to manage together.

Thank you