



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva

**Statement by Ambassador Tahir Hussain Andrabi, Acting
Permanent Representative of Pakistan, during Informal thematic
session on agenda item 3 (PAROS) at the Plenary Meeting of the
Conference on Disarmament, Geneva
12 June 2019**

Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by thanking the panellists for their excellent presentations and thoughtful remarks. Outer space is being used by an increasing number of States, both for civilian and military purposes. While our dependence on outer space applications is on the rise, the risk of its weaponization is also growing. We are becoming increasingly concerned by the threats posed from ASAT capabilities to regional and global stability as well as to the long-term sustainability of outer space. In the absence of strong legal instruments, other states could also follow suit by demonstrating such capabilities. The potential integration of Anti Ballistic Missile systems into space assets adds another worrying dimension to this matter.

There is an urgent need to prevent outer space from emerging as a new realm of conflict and arms race, threatening regional and international peace and security as well as the long term sustainability of peaceful space activities. Being a strong proponent of the non-weaponization of outer space, Pakistan will continue working with like-minded countries to address the gaps in the international legal regime governing the exploration and use of outer space.

Mr. President,

The issue of PAROS has been on the CD's agenda for over three and a half decades. It is eminently ripe for commencement of negotiations on a legally binding treaty. The draft Treaty commonly known as PPWT, tabled jointly by China and Russia, provides a useful basis for the commencement of negotiations.

The countries presently enjoying dominance in outer space should not be blinded by this perception. Their current technological prowess will not be able to last forever. Other countries are catching up rapidly. And this time, the developing countries will neither carry the burden of non-proliferation, nor will they accept any discriminatory restrictions which hamper their pursuits in outer space. We need to evolve universal and equitable regulations that can guarantee the exclusively peaceful nature of outer space, before it turns into a new sphere of security competition. We should stay ahead of the curve and cooperate constructively to prevent this occurrence.

The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 recognized that the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all humanity, that is, our common heritage. The treaty prohibits the deployment of nuclear weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in outer space, but is silent on the placement of other types of weapons including conventional weapons that could be used to engage targets on Earth or in outer space. Moreover, it does not prohibit the use of force against outer space objects from Earth. These issues need to be addressed in a comprehensive treaty on PAROS, negotiated in the CD.

Mr. President,

Pakistan welcomed the adoption of resolution 72/250 by the UNGA in 2017 that set up a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. A Pakistani expert was part of the GGE and contributed to its work in a substantive and constructive manner. The GGE was quite close to fulfilling its mandate by making recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on PAROS, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We were disappointed that consensus could not be reached and the GGE regrettably failed to approve its final report.

We note the valuable informal discussions on PAROS that have been held in the CD over the years. These deliberations, together with those held in the GGE, have greatly helped in developing a better understanding of the different perspectives and reinforced our view that the contentious issues concerning PAROS can be resolved during negotiations and should be pursued on priority in the CD.

Mr. President,

The UN General Assembly has also been adopting another important resolution spearheaded by the Russian Federation, and co-sponsored by

Pakistan every year since 2013, titled “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space”. As announced by my delegation at the CD plenary on 28 May, the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and the Russian Federation recently signed a Joint Statement on “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space”. This is a practical manifestation of our commitment to “not in any way be the first to place weapons of any kind in Outer Space” and to “make all possible efforts to prevent Outer Space from becoming an arena for military confrontation and to ensure security in Outer Space activities”. We also encourage other responsible space-faring nations to follow this example.

Mr. President,

The GGE on Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) in Outer Space that met during 2012 to 2013 agreed on a consensus report with certain concrete recommendations endorsed by the UNGA. While recognizing the value of TCBMs as well as other non-legally binding measures in promoting trust and confidence among states, Pakistan does not see such voluntary measures as a substitute for legally-binding treaty-based obligations. There are clear gaps in the international legal regime governing the use of outer space with grave security implications. These gaps can only be plugged by concluding a treaty on PAROS that prohibits the placement of weapons in outer space and also bans the threat or use of force against outer space objects.

I thank you, Mr. President.
