



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN  
Geneva**

**Statement by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi at the Plenary Meeting of the  
Conference on Disarmament  
30 March 2023**

**Madam President,**

Thank you for convening this plenary meeting.

We align ourselves with the statement of G-21 delivered by Sri Lanka.

**Madam President,**

While our reliance on outer space in our daily lives has grown manifold, the threats and likelihood of a conflict in or from outer space have also increased. Several delegations, including ours, have been highlighting the increasing complexity of threats in and from outer space.

The most visible manifestation of these threats is the unstoppable arms race and placement of weapons in this space.

Even more worryingly, such threats are magnified by the growing integration of weapons, technologies, platforms and dedicated force structures in the nuclear, cyber, conventional and outer space domains.

The mutually reinforcing nature of defensive and offensive capabilities such as the deployment of missile defence systems and their amalgamation with outer space systems is adversely impacting strategic stability at the global and regional levels.

Destabilizing capabilities such as Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT) and directed energy weapons are being complemented by non-kinetic capabilities.

We are also now witnessing space policies, doctrines and establishment of structures that envisage space dominance, warfighting and aim to extend deterrence in outer space.

In the absence of legal constraints, these systems allow pre-emptive and disarming strikes against terrestrial systems, entailing dangerous consequences for safety, security and sustainability at earth and in outer space.

Let us make no mistake. Any conflict, if it erupts in or originates from outer space will not just remain limited to that domain. It will have devastating consequences on our daily lives and its effects will be far and wide across various domains. All states, even those, which may not have any space assets will be affected. Similarly, conflicts taking place on the earth are increasingly likely to be projected in outer space as well.

**Madam President,**

In this backdrop, the urgency of undertaking meaningful actions has never been greater.

The agenda item on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) was first added to CD's agenda in 1982. It is regrettable that there has been no progress under this item for over four decades.

Initially, the naysayers denied the possibility of an arms race in outer space. Then, they said it was too late to prevent its militarization and the focus should rather be on non-weaponization.

And it is now being asserted that given its dual-use nature, the only pragmatic way to make progress is to focus efforts on security of space systems. This framing is tenuous at best and at worst risks legitimizing the weaponization of outer space.

Let us not ignore that we may have already crossed the threshold of weaponizing outer space. But we are still being asked to lower our ambition and instead focus only on peripheral issues, while ignoring capabilities, through non-legally binding norms.

Any discussion on norms, rules and principles that is restricted to only responsible state behaviour would be disingenuous, if it does not cover development, deployment and testing of war-fighting space capabilities. Without it, no amount of transparency measures or information exchange will be able to bridge the trust deficit among states that exists today.

**Madam President,**

Our predecessors with their foresight were able to declare outer space as ‘province of all mankind’ and reserve its exploration ‘for the benefit and in the interests of all countries’. Imagine if they had also settled on lowering their ambitions, we would never have had the Outer Space Treaty in the first place.

However, the evolution in Space Law has neither kept pace with rapid technological advancements nor with growing risks in and from outer space.

The well-known gaps of international legal regime cannot be filled by TCBMs or other non-legally binding norms, which may politically be more convenient for states developing offensive space capabilities. These measures are complementary at best and cannot substitute legally binding measures.

The best means to plug the legal gap is to commence negotiations without further delay and conclude a treaty in the CD that prohibits the placement of weapons in outer space and outlaws the threat or use of force against outer space objects.

It is regrettable that a handful of states continue to block the start of negotiations on legal instruments citing definitional and verification related issues without explaining how such negotiations would affect their security interests. The naysayers have also not explained why definitional and verification issues cannot be taken up during the negotiations.

### **Madam President**

Past has invariably shaped present and future. It is clear that technological or military monopolies of the few do not last for too long. Diffusion of technology follows. Other states also acquire capabilities to address asymmetries and threat perceptions. Risks of acquisition by unauthorized actors increase. For these very reasons, it is therefore both urgent and prudent to prevent weaponization of the outer space.

A holistic approach to security, rather than a piecemeal or a selective one, in outer space remains the most viable option to make progress under this agenda item.

The rich body of work on PAROS at the CD provides us with more than ample substance to start work.

We hope all CD members would do their part in preserving the international consensus on PAROS and contribute to the development of effective legal measures to mitigate the full spectrum of space threats and risks emanating from a militarized, contested and congested outer space. Given that it is a global common, the benefits of such outcomes would be in the interests of all.

I thank you.

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