



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

**Statement by Mr. Muhammad Omar, First Secretary,
at First and Second Meeting of Subsidiary Body 3, Conference on
Disarmament, Geneva
07 June 2022**

Madam Coordinator,

We congratulate you on your appointment as the Coordinator for this Subsidiary Body and assure you of our constructive participation.

We thank UNIDIR and Chair of the OEWG on space threats for their useful presentations.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished delegation of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 21.

Madam Coordinator,

The salience and urgency of preventing the arms race in outer space merits not just a stocktaking exercise but also to situate this agenda item in the contemporary geo-strategic environment.

The nature and extent of security threats in, from and to outer space as well as earth has grown manifold. The most visible manifestation of these threats is the unstoppable arms race and placement of weapons in outer 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 represents yet another layer of threats to strategic stability at the global and regional levels.

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.

The line between peaceful and military uses of outer space is being blurred as non-governmental actors themselves are no longer singularly confined to its peaceful exploitation. The growing fusion between civilian, intelligence and military institutions and endeavours is no longer a well-kept secret.

Some states openly speak about extending deterrence to outer space. Destabilizing capabilities such as Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT) and directed energy weapons are being complemented by placement of weapons in outer space with potential implications for outer space as well as on earth.

Today, the array of and nature of threats includes kinetic as well as non-kinetic weapons; from capabilities in various orbital situations, direct ascent capabilities as well as those from other terrestrial systems or from enablers of yet another set of terrestrial systems.

These developments undermine the spirit and principles of existing international law governing outer space. Left unaddressed, these growing risks pose serious threats to global as well as regional peace, security and stability.

Madam Coordinator,

This state of affairs also underscores inter alia that the existing normative and legal architecture governing the security dimensions of outer space has not kept pace with growing risks.

It also illustrates that the existing international legal regime has seemingly been unable to infuse “responsible behaviour” in reducing space threats or preventing an arms race in and weaponization of outer space.

Foreseeing the dangers of militarization of this space and recognizing the lack of legal rules to offset them effectively, the international community has for decades called for “further measures” and “appropriate international negotiations” to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The Tenth Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) and numerous subsequent resolutions of this universal body reaffirm realization of this long-standing imperative.

As UNIDIR noted, the CD worked on developing a legal framework to prevent an arms race in outer space with a focus on three dimensions. These included: one; effective and verifiable agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space; two; agreement to prohibit anti-satellite systems; and three; a treaty on the prohibition of the stationing of weapons of any kind in outer space.

The mere fact that even today this Subsidiary Body is obliged to examine the same issues which the Ad Hoc committee on PAROS did over three decades ago is another reminder, not just of the lack of political will to negotiate but also a clear evidence of obfuscation by a handful of states. There can be no other explanation for such opposition except that these States seek to protect their monopolies and maintain their “full spectrum dominance”.

It is an unfortunate reality that despite overwhelming support for negotiating a legal instrument on PAROS, the CD continues to be prevented by a small number of states from doing so.

Madam Coordinator,

This is the current status of PAROS.

As for addressing challenges related to outer space, the urgent risks to global as well as regional peace and security that I have outlined above, the well-known gaps in the international legal regime governing the use of outer space, make PAROS an over-ripe topic and the CD should commence negotiations on a legally binding instrument, without further delay.

These dangers can no longer be dismissed, and the legal gaps can only be plugged by concluding a treaty by the CD that prohibits the placement of weapons in outer space and outlaws the threat or use of force against outer space objects. The rich body of work on PAROS at the CD provides us with more than ample substance to start work in this regard.

Countries blocking commencement of negotiations on legal instruments on PAROS owe an explanation for their continued opposition. During these discussions, my delegation would like to understand the reasons for their opposition and how such negotiations would affect their security interests. We would also like to point out the self-serving approach of some of these countries during the work of at least another subsidiary body i.e. commencement of negotiations does not undermine security interests.

We urge these states to demonstrate responsible behaviour by lifting their long-standing opposition to the start of negotiations on legal instruments on PAROS at the CD.

Madam Coordinator,

As a first step to get us to commence these negotiations, this Subsidiary Body's consideration of threats to and from outer space should lead to tangible deliverables.

We stress the centrality of three core principles and their reaffirmation as part of such recommendations. First, the principle enshrined in the Outer Space Treaty i.e. "use of outer space for the benefit and in the interests of all countries". Second, the cardinal principle of ensuring equal security for all states and third, the primary responsibility of states with significant military capability vis-à-vis prevention of an arms race in outer space.

In addition to reaffirmation of the applicability of existing principles and rules related to outer space, we must also explore options for proposing new legal rules to plug the existing gaps in the international regime governing outer space. And lastly, we should clearly provide a roadmap that answers the fundamental question of how to start PAROS negotiations.

Madam Coordinator,

The United Nations system as a whole has a central role in addressing the issues related to security, safety and sustainability of outer space. There are several multilateral institutions, with distinct mandates, to deliberate and develop a set of measures to ensure that outer space remains a “global common” for all people and states.

The mandate and focus of this body remains PAROS negotiations.

We recognize the usefulness and value of TCBMs and codes of conduct. They are however at best complementary and voluntary. Continued insistence on these measures alone detracts attention from the urgent imperative of legal constraints to prevent an arms race in outer space and prohibit the placement of weapons in outer space.

The usefulness and relevance of these complementary measures can be leveraged in the preparatory process of negotiating legal instruments to prevent an arms race in and weaponization of outer space.

Without prejudice to the urgency of commencement of negotiations in the CD in this vital area, we can support the calls for establishment of a technical group of experts to examine issues surrounding definitions, scope and verification in support of legal instruments to prevent weaponization of outer space.

Madam Coordinator,

Pakistan is party to all of the five core multilateral treaties governing the peaceful uses of outer space.

As a common heritage of mankind, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that use of outer space remains exclusively peaceful and for the benefit and interest of all.

The draft Treaty commonly known as PPWT provides a concrete basis for starting negotiations in this body. We call on States blocking the commencement of negotiations on PPWT to revisit their approach and position.

I thank you, Madam Coordinator.
