



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

Statement

FIRST COMMITTEE – 75TH UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

Statement by Pakistan

Thematic Debate on Outer Space (disarmament aspects) (-- October 2020)

Mr. Chairman,

1. Outer space is being explored and 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.
2. We are becoming increasingly concerned by the threats posed from Anti-Satellite capabilities to regional and global stability as well as to the long-term sustainability of outer space. In the absence of strong legal instruments regulating the testing, development and deployment of ASAT weapons, other states could also follow suit by demonstrating such capabilities. The potential integration of Anti Ballistic Missile systems and their components into space assets adds another worrying dimension to this matter.
3. There is an urgent need to prevent outer space from emerging as a new realm of conflict and arms race. Being a strong proponent of the non-weaponization of outer space, Pakistan reiterates its call on the CD to immediately commence negotiations on PAROS to comprehensively address the gaps in the international legal regime governing the exploration and use of outer space.

Mr. Chairman,

4. 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 in 2008, and updated in 2014, provides a useful basis for start of negotiations.
5. The countries presently enjoying dominance in outer space should not be blinded by this perception. Their current technological prowess will not 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.

6. 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 WMDs 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. Chairman,

7. Pakistan welcomed the establishment of a 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.

8. 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 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 in the CD.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The General Assembly has also been adopting another important resolution spearheaded by Russian Federation, and co-sponsored by Pakistan every year since 2013, titled “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space”. On 28 May 2019, the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and the Russian Federation 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. Chairman,

10. The 2013 GGE on TCBMs in Outer Space agreed on a consensus report with certain concrete recommendations endorsed by the UNGA. While recognizing the value of TCBMs 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 comprehensively prohibits the weaponisation of outer space and also bans the threat or use of force against outer space objects.
