

Canadian Statement
Agenda Item 5 – Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.
Delivered by: Ashlyn Milligan, Global Affairs Canada

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
Sixty Sixth session, Vienna, 31 May – 9 June, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Space is an integral part of our daily lives, helping connect and inform us, enabling everything from navigation, cell phone services and television broadcasts to financial transactions. Space-based technologies are key to keeping remote communities connected around the world. Data collected from space-based technologies, helps unite nations as we tackle global challenges in climate change, disaster management and environmental monitoring. Maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes is critical in preserving the viability of space infrastructure and it is the responsibility of all spacefaring nations.

COPUOS plays a fundamental role in the promotion of international dialogue and exchange of information. As the peaceful exploration and the use of outer space is entering an exciting phase involving new frontiers and new activities, we must all remember that outer space is not lawless. International law, including the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, applies to outer space activities. It is also thanks to the legal framework established by the core space treaties through COPUOS that humanity has been able to successfully and peacefully use and explore outer space for the benefit and in the interests of all countries. Canada believes that ratification, implementation and adherence to the international legal framework, and other international instruments such as the LTS and Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, should remain a key priority for nations, and can significantly contribute towards a peaceful and stable space environment.

Mr. Chair,

While the work of COPUOS focuses on the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes, Canada believes that responsible behaviours in space can also contribute greatly to the preservation of a sustainable and peaceful space environment. Such behaviours include actions such as the exchange of information in a timely manner in order to reduce adverse impacts to space operations or to avoid misunderstandings.

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This is why Canada is a strong proponent of the 21 LTS Guidelines and the open exchanges in the LTS 2.0 working group concerning implementation of the guidelines. Open and transparent dialogue on space safety and sustainability compliments work being undertaken in other fora, including to develop responsible behaviors. The aim of commonly understood responsible behaviours is to create mutual understanding and trust, in order to reduce misperceptions and miscalculations thereby helping to prevent confrontation and to foster stability.

In addition, the publication of national policies on the use of outer space is one of the ways to enhance information exchange and promote transparency. Canada welcomes UNIDIR's Space Security Portal as a platform to foster interaction among nations. In addition to other tools, such as registration of space objects with the UN, and advance notification of launches in accordance with The Hague Code of Conduct – all to inform effective and timely communications to avoid misunderstanding of intentions, and maintain the peaceful use of outer space, particularly in times of heightened tension.

Mr. Chair,

In Canada's view, the deliberate destruction of space systems can have a destabilizing effect on space safety, security and sustainability, creating unnecessary hazards to space operations, including that of human space flight. We therefore welcome the commitment by 13 States not to conduct destructive, direct ascent anti-satellite missile tests, and we were proud to co-sponsor UN Resolution A/77/41 and call upon all States to support such an initiative.

From Canada's perspective, pragmatic, non-binding standards of responsible behaviours should be applied as soon as possible which, if accepted by a majority of nations, could become legally binding international law in the future. We are therefore pleased to support the ongoing work of the Open-Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules, and principles of responsible behaviour.

Canada believes that adhering to and implementing the existing tools that we have available under the existing legal framework, along with enacting norms and principles of

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responsible behaviour and enhancing communications - we can collectively preserve the peaceful uses of outer space for generations to come.