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Statement under Agenda Item 8. *Space Debris*

Fifty-ninth Session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee
of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

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Mister Chairman, the Secure World Foundation takes the floor under this agenda item to offer some views and observations that we believe may assist this Subcommittee in its deliberations on the subject of space debris.

While the issue of space debris has been an agenda item before this Subcommittee for years, focused discussions and consensus decisions on actionable goals remain urgent. In particular, many of the discussions to date have focused solely on space debris mitigation, which is reducing the amount of orbital debris generated by space activities. While important, mitigation is only part of the solution to addressing the threat space debris poses to current and future space activities.

We encourage this Committee and member delegations to expand their consideration of this topic to include space debris remediation in addition to mitigation. Remediation is the action of reversing or stopping something, often used in the context of environmental damage. In this context, space debris remediation refers to reversing the build-up of space debris that has already taken place over the last several decades of human activities in space.

Space debris remediation is not one technology or concept, but rather a set of capabilities that includes active removal of orbital debris that pose a risk to active satellites, post-mission disposal of inactive satellites, just-in-time collision avoidance to prevent collisions between active satellites and debris objects, and future capabilities to reuse or recycle derelict space objects. These technologies are not just ideas on the drawing board of engineers. Some space actors are already starting to develop and test such capabilities in orbit.

We therefore encourage this Committee to add consideration of these activities to our broader set of discussions on space debris and the long-term sustainability of space activities. Developing space remediation capabilities will require carefully considered discussion of the international best practices and norms of behavior for their use. In addition, there are many legal and policy questions regarding use of these capabilities within the existing principles of international space law that must be considered and decided upon.

We believe that this Committee is well-placed to lead many of these discussions.

Mister Chairman, distinguished delegates, thank you for your kind attention.

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