

Statement by Ambassador OGASAWARA Ichiro

On Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS)

At the Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, 1 June 2021

At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, Ambassador Salomon Eheth, for setting PAROS as the topic for today's plenary and allowing CD Member States to exchange views on this important topic.

Indeed, regardless of the country or region, our security and socio-economic prosperity becomes more than ever reliant on Space. Space provides an essential platform to us all. Japan launched its first satellite in 1970 following the Soviet Union, the U.S. and France and now ranks fifth in the World in terms of number of satellites it has launched. Japan has continued to provide assistances to numerous countries for their space activities both through multilateral frameworks such as the International Space Station, and through bilateral technical cooperation programs. Japan has been cooperating with more than 60 countries in the area of the peaceful

use of Space. The launch of “Al Amar (Hope)”, the Mars exploring satellites of the UAE last year can be quoted as most emblematic success in recent bilateral cooperation.

Mr. President

The peaceful and sustainable use of Space is now facing an ever-growing risk. As the uses of Space become diversified and the number of state and non-state actors also increase, Space is becoming more congested. The problem of long-lasting Space debris is compounded by the development and deployment of counterspace capabilities such as Direct Ascent Anti-Satellite or ASAT weapon systems and also by satellite collisions.

Based on these evaluations, Japan revised the Basic Plan on Space Policy, in June 2020, which holds up the ensuring Space security as one of the main targets of Space Policy. As the risks which hamper the peaceful and sustainable use of Space is growing, Japan will continue to proactively engage in multilateral discussions

and contribute to the development of effective rules and norms in order to ensure security, safety and sustainability of Space and to let the rule of law prevail there as well, towards a better future for space activities.

Mr. President

It is crucial for the international community to reach through discussions a common understanding on what the threats against Space systems are and how to reduce them in order to maintain Space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable domain without arms race.

I reiterate Japan's unwavering support for the idea of preventing an arms race in Outer Space. We have constructively participated in substantive discussion on PAROS within the Conference on Disarmament since its emergence as an agenda item in 1982 including that of the Ad hoc committee of the CD on PAROS between 1985 and 1994. In parallel, Japan also participated in the Group of Governmental Experts of the United Nations on PAROS in 2018 and 2019.

Throughout these discussions, Japan has underlined the importance of TCBM as a practical short-term steps to avoid risks of miscalculation and misunderstanding in Space activities.

It is unfortunate that previous discussions have not produced the expected substantive outcomes. This is partially because of the difficulty to define a “weapon” in Space due to the fact that all objects in Space have dual-use nature. This dual-use nature also brings complexity to verification, which is one of the essential components of all arms control instruments and poses difficult challenges to identifying Space threats through focusing solely on technological capabilities. Space security should be discussed in a comprehensive manner by addressing issues arising not only from the outer Space itself but also from links between objects on Earth and in Space such as data links.

With this in mind, Japan co-sponsored last year the UNGA Resolution 75/36. The resolution does not intend to define “weapons” in Space as previously attempted. Rather, it is more feasible to establish a common understanding on patterns of

behaviors that are regarded as either responsible or irresponsible. Since behaviors can be observed from the ground and even in outer space, they can serve as measurable criteria for identifying potentially threatening activities in the absence of explicit intention. While the legality of such irresponsible behaviors awaits further discussion, the international community should strongly discourage such behaviors in light of their potential consequences to peaceful, safe and sustainable uses of Space. Japan believes that this behaviors-based approach will contribute to enhancing security in outer Space by mitigating threats through reducing risks of misunderstanding and miscalculation, which could entail increasing tension and conflict. Moreover, it underscores the importance of increased transparency and confidence building measures to this end.

Within our written submission to the UN Secretary-General under UNGA Resolution 75/36, Japan outlined three areas of focus to be examined in the way forward to building common understandings of Space security threats and responsible behaviors. First, Creation of debris by deliberate destruction of space objects. Second, Rendezvous and proximity operations (RPO). Third, Harmful

interference. In particular, with regard to the first point, the national submission of Japan mentions “States should refrain from using or testing those capabilities in a way that generates negative impacts on the space environment, especially through the creation of long-lived debris which could hamper the freedom of access to and use of outer space.” Japan calls on all Member States to do so as a matter of urgency and without waiting for the establishment of any rules.

Now that our reliance on the outer Space is heightened in an unprecedented manner, Space security is in the common interest for all. It is therefore crucial to continue inclusive discussions. The approach focusing on “behavior” proposed by the UNGA Resolution gives the basis of the inclusive discussion and may enable us to overcome the hindrance to the substantive outcomes by the discussion in this Conference. We hope lively discussion based on the approach of “Responsible behavior”.

To promote such discussions, Japan co-organized a 1.5 track workshop in cooperation with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in April this year while

inviting participants from the Asia Pacific region. Japan values such exchanges of views and looks forward to continuing discussion on this important agenda.

Mr. President

To conclude, let me recall that Operative paragraph 4 of the UNGA Resolution 75/36 ‘invites States members and observers of the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission to inform those bodies of their national space security policies, strategies or doctrines, on a voluntary basis’. Japan believes this exercise, in which we, State Members, are invited to engage, will contribute to enhancing transparency and credibility. As such, Japan appreciates the opportunity for discussion today and welcomes further occasions to be held to this end in this august body.

Thank you, Mr President.

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