Romania’s National Contribution to the UN Secretary General’s Report following Resolution A/RES/75/36

Romania welcomes the adoption of the Resolution A/RES/75/36 on ”Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours” and joins the other states’ efforts to reach a common understanding on how to reduce threats to space systems in order to maintain outer space a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment.

I. Introduction

Space systems have become key enablers for a wide variety of commercial, scientific and military applications. The rapid growth of their capabilities has offset some of the size of the required investment and new developments promise an even greater reduction in the cost of space infrastructure.

As such, some of the existent space systems become deeply embedded in the functioning of societies, supporting economies, lifestyles and governance processes. The increasing dependence on certain space systems places them firmly in the area of critical infrastructure. Space systems have become a technological backbone for existing recognized critical infrastructures, such as energy, transportation, administration and others. As such, Romania is recognizing the critical character of the space infrastructure and lists space systems as critical infrastructures in the national legislation.

Preserving a peaceful outer space contributes also to nations’ security. This is of utmost importance having in mind that the economic activity is also, as indicated before, more and more dependent to safety of outer space activities.

II. Relevant risks and threats

Space and security are conceptualised in a two-folded manner: space-based assets and systems are critical to ensuring security on Earth (security from space). At the same time, these assets need to be protected in the difficult environment of outer space (security of space).

Space debris represents one of the most visible threats in outer space, which can result from natural causes, man-made causes or counter-space capabilities. States should refrain from any actions prone to generating space debris, which could affect or destroy equipment placed in space.

As the amount of debris is growing, so is the vulnerability of space systems which, in turn, poses significant problems for terrestrial systems dependent on the main categories of space services – navigation, positioning, synchronization, information gathering, command, control and communication capabilities, as well as early warning. At the same time, this situation may lead to orbits unusable for human activities.

Other relevant risks to outer space activities stem from lack of transparency which could lead to miscalculations.
III. Nature and spirit of norms of responsible behaviour

Romania regards outer space as a global common good, to be used for the benefit of all. It is important to conducting space activities in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty and other applicable international law as well as guiding principles developed in the UN framework represent the cornerstone of the global governance of outer space. It is important that every state conduct its activities in outer space in accordance with the international treaties it is part to.

States should undertake to identify the necessary parameters for a responsible behaviour in outer space, and in this vein, dialogue is of utmost importance. Measures of transparency and openness are vital, with the view to creating an environment conducive to peace.

Given the dual-use nature of many space systems, concentrating on behaviours and manners of conducting activities in outer space will be more effective in ensuring the security and safety of space and will not depend on the development of new technologies.

States should consider making national space policies, strategies and doctrine publicly available and share open-access space situational awareness data and catalogues to the greatest extent possible.

Climate change and the current Covid-19 pandemic have proven that all nations’ security also depends on their economy and on the resilience of their critical infrastructures and societies. In their turn economies, critical infrastructures and societies depend on activities in outer space. Considering all the existing and emerging challenges and threats, states should adopt a pragmatic approach, including by strengthening international cooperation, in order to counter threats to critical space infrastructures.

IV. Way forward

States’ involvement in the subject is relevant for their standing commitments to global disarmament, for facing the challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community, as well as for their continuous efforts to seek out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

All these undertakings and concerns are pursued and fall under the mandate of the UN General Assembly First Committee, the appropriate forum to discuss the possible way ahead. The discussion should be as inclusive as possible, as all states are linked to space activities.