



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

National contribution to the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours

Following the adoption of UNGA Resolution 75/36 *“Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”*, Italy actively contributed to the UNSG report both with a national contribution as well as with a joint EU contribution.

Italy therefore welcomes the adoption of UNGA Resolution 76/231, which ushers in a renewed commitment at the multilateral level to reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.

Italy fully supports the establishment of this Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) aiming at reaching “a common understanding of how best to act to reduce threats to space systems in order to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment, free from an arms race and conflict, for the benefit of all”.

Italy welcomes a multi-stakeholder approach, and encourages “the attendance of international organizations, commercial actors and civil society representatives, in accordance with established practice”, as it believes that an open and inclusive process can significantly contribute to identifying effective norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours in outer space.

Today more than ever, there is a need to promote greater international cooperation to prevent outer space from becoming an arena of conflict. Thus, Italy believes that the best solution for developing effective norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour is to attract the broadest possible support in order to ensure the legitimacy of any multilateral effort.

With the New-Space paradigm and current and expected technological development, the space domain is becoming a more complex scenario. Depending on the area of space in which activities take place, security in space is gradually becoming more linked to economic and social stability on Earth and increasingly critical to ensuring that future space exploration and exploitation activities are conducted in the most balanced way possible.

The current strategic space environment appears increasingly congested, contested and competitive. The development of new technologies and capabilities, but especially the entry of new players, characterises the sector, and the most valuable resources are rapidly being exploited to the full.

That is why security from and in space seems to be no longer a purely military and national issue, but rather a multi-sector and global issue that needs to be addressed at international level with the broadest engagement of traditional space-faring nations, emerging space countries, private space companies and enterprises.

Accidental risks and intentional threats – both conventional and asymmetric – increasingly affect the stability of outer space. On one hand, the space environment is characterised by risks of natural origin (commonly identified as 'hazards') as well as any risk event in space involving satellites from two different countries – such as an unexpected approach – that could easily be mistaken also for a hostile act. The unintentionality of a collision event in space could also be a matter of discussion if such a collision involves a satellite of strategic importance. This represents, in particular, an increasing risk, as orbits are becoming progressively congested, especially at low altitude, due to the launch of so-called mega-constellations with hundreds and even thousands of satellites. On the other hand, the list of space threats – understood as threats in space resulting from deliberate acts with hostile intentions – is growing: while some space threats are obvious and relatively easy to attribute (such as an ASAT sent against a satellite) most are more subtle, such as those based on cyber and electronic warfare rather than occupation and orbital saturation.

In such a context, the proliferation of dual-use systems has blurred the line between military and civil use, making it more complicated to protect and defend space assets and identify threats.

Italy is historically engaged in concretely improving space security and is strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which is essential for strengthening international security and stability and for safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis.

Italy commends the ongoing work by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) on the implementation of the 21 Guidelines for the Long Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Activities, and continues to be firmly committed to the long-term sustainability, safety and security of the outer space.

Italy remains fully committed to preventing an arms race in outer space and encourages further international cooperation to elaborate agreed norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.

While recognising the invaluable role played by the legal framework governing space activities – in particular the 1967 Treaty on the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies – in consolidating a legal regime to promote the use of outer space and strengthen international cooperation in space activities, Italy believes that norms, rules and principle of responsible behaviours should be elaborated and put in place in order to promote security, safety and sustainability in outer space and to safeguard the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes.

Italy considers that the adoption of voluntary measures and responsible behaviour commitments of a non-legally binding nature, including the implementation of voluntary TCBMs (Transparency and Confidence Building Measures) could also be an important intermediate step in maximising the chances of a successful outcome of future negotiations for a binding treaty.

Italy will therefore contribute constructively to the works of the OEWG on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.