

**Document of the Russian Federation  
on the scope of work of the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG)  
established pursuant to UN GA resolution 76/231  
"Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible  
behaviours"**

The Russian Federation notes risks of turning outer space into a springboard for aggression and war, which have recently become increasingly real. We are concerned that certain UN Member States implement policies aimed at placing weapons in outer space and using outer space for combat operations to ensure their dominance and superiority. Ambitious programs are underway to develop weapons systems designed to exert a force and threaten to use a force in outer space, from outer space or against outer space.

Such actions have the most adverse impact on international peace and security and can lead to a serious destabilization of the situation and an arms race in outer space, which would totally undermine any prospects for arms limitation and reduction in general. In this regard, we deem unacceptable any attempts to position outer space as a new arena of rivalry and conflicts between States.

In light of these trends, the 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation considers intention to place weapons in outer space as a main external military danger, and disruption of the functioning of outer space monitoring systems, as a military threat.

A "military danger" refers to inter-State or intra-State relations characterized by the combination of factors which can lead to a military threat under certain conditions. A "military threat" refers to inter-State or intra-State relations characterized by a real possibility of an outbreak of a military conflict between opposing sides and by a high degree of readiness of a given State (group of States) or separatist (terrorist) organizations to resort to military force (armed violence).

Based on this assessment of threats and dangers in relation to outer space, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are assigned to ensure the following national defence and State security tasks: to ensure timely warning of an aerospace attack; to ensure readiness to counter aerospace attacks; to deploy and maintain in the strategic space area orbital constellations of spacecraft, which support the activities of the Russian Armed Forces; and to improve the aerospace defence system. Russia's actions in outer space are non-confrontational and strictly comply with international law, including the basic 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

Against this background, we believe it is necessary, with a view to building the OEWG activity in the most effective way, to focus its efforts on issues of prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) and maintenance of outer space for peaceful use. In light of continuing relevance of the PAROS goals, considering issues of applicability of international humanitarian law and right to self-defence with regard to outer space in the OEWG seems disconnected from reality and unrelated to the very purpose of PAROS.

To that end, it is necessary to reaffirm the commitment to the decisions of the First UN Special Session on Disarmament (1978) providing for exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, PAROS and launch of negotiations in line with the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. Reaffirmation of existing international legal norms and principles regulating outer space activity has gained particular relevance. This include the provisions of the UN Charter, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, the 1963 Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, the 1972 Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects, the 1974 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, and the 1977 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques.

It is generally recognized that despite their positive role in regulating the outer space activity, the existing international treaties concerning outer space and

the legal regime they provide for cannot fully prevent an arms race in outer space and threat or use of force in, from and against outer space, and maintain outer space for peaceful purposes.

In this regard, there is a need for strengthening the said regime. Without reliable guarantees for weapons-free outer space set forth in an international legally binding document, resolution of issues related to peaceful uses of outer space and ensuring security of outer space activity is pointless.

The UN Member States should commit at national and international levels to fully exclude outer space from an arms race and maintain it for peaceful purposes for the benefit of the humankind. In particular, it means that there should be no weapons of any type placed in outer space (including in orbit around the Earth and on celestial bodies), the use of force or the threat of force against space objects or with their use should be prohibited, and a full and comprehensive ban on outer space strike weapons designed to hit space objects should be enshrined.

Specifically, such an approach implies that the UN Member States accept the following commitments:

- not to use space objects as a means of destroying any targets on Earth, in the air, or in outer space;
- not to develop, test or deploy weapons in outer space for any purpose, including missile defence, as anti-satellite weapons, for use against targets on Earth or in the air, as well as to dismantle such systems already available to States;
- not to develop, test, deploy or use space weapons for missile defence as anti-satellite weapons, for use against targets on Earth or in the air;
- not to destroy, damage, disrupt the normal functioning of, or change the flight trajectory of space objects of other States; and
- not to assist or incite other States, groups of States, international, intergovernmental or any other non-governmental organizations, including non-governmental legal entities incorporated, registered or located in the territory under their jurisdiction and/or control, to participate in the above activities.

The development of an international legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space and to preserve it for peaceful purposes, prohibiting the placement of any kind of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of force in, from or against outer space, should be launched without delay. It can be based on the Russian-Chinese draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT).

The Russian Federation proceeds from the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) as an integral element of the international legally binding instrument on PAROS. These are the measures that are designed to ensure, *inter alia*, the resolution of controversial situations related to the implementation of the future treaty.

TCBMs can be used as an interim measure for the period of development of the legally binding treaty on PAROS, ensuring predictability with respect to outer space activities. TCBMs should aim at the complete prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of force against space objects or with their use, and should supplement rather than replace effective legally binding instruments in the field of outer space activities.

The Russian Federation considers it appropriate to introduce the TCBMs recommended by the relevant UN Group of Governmental Experts<sup>1</sup> into international and national practice. We advocate their application on a voluntary basis at the national level, to the fullest extent possible and practicable and consistent with the interests of the UN Member States.

International initiative/political commitment of no first placement of weapons in outer space (NFP) remains relevant for maintaining international peace, ensuring equal and indivisible security for all, and increasing predictability and sustainability of States' activities aimed at exploring and using outer space for

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<sup>1</sup> A/68/186

peaceful purposes. The NFP comprises 30 UN Member States<sup>2</sup> that are its full-fledged participants.

The NFP initiative is unprecedented in its significance as a transparency and confidence-building measure. At the same time, it is an important step towards the PPWT and cannot be considered in isolation from the efforts of the international community on PAROS in accordance with the UN GA resolution under the same title. The widely supported annual UN GA resolutions on NFP and TCBMs demonstrate that the majority of the UN Member States share Russian approaches to TCBMs and PAROS.

The Russian Federation would like to remind that the UN Committee on Space (COPUOS) has a broad mandate. A number of issues raised by the OEWG, including space debris, are the subject of discussion by the COPUOS Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (LTSSA) and may eventually be the subject of additional LTSSA guidelines. In this regard, we believe it is unacceptable to ignore the competence of COPUOS in the decision-making process with respect to outer space activities as it may lead to undermining its special role enshrined in the UN GA decisions.

We believe that the current COPUOS Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines are sufficient to address this issue. Presenting space debris as the most significant threat to the space environment does not reflect the real state of affairs. We advocate for the prohibition of any interference with space objects belonging to other States without their consent to such an action.

The Russian Federation expects that the OEWG will deliver results which would promote the PAROS goals and the development of a multilateral legally binding instrument on PAROS containing guarantees against the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against space objects.

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<sup>2</sup> Argentina, Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Republic of Congo, Russian Federation, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam.