

DEU Initial Statement
in the Open-Ended Working Group on reducing space
threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible
behaviours

Mr. Chair,

I congratulate you for your election and efforts to organize and to structure our work in this OEWG. You have the full support of my delegation for your approach.

Let me also thank the panelists for their valuable contributions.

Mr. Chair,

We are assembled in this Working Group to enhance outer space security and to prevent an arms race in outer space. This is extremely challenging in a time, when one country, namely Russia, by attacking Ukraine, is shattering peace in Europe, gravely breaking international law and undermining the foundations of the European security architecture.

The Russian Federation has for many years called for guarantees to prevent an arms race in outer space – yet its aggression against Ukraine is a case of the most blatant disregards for political commitments Russia itself has made.

Addressing security challenges in the space domain is highly urgent. The use of space underpins our way of life as well as

the prosperity, safety and security of all States in an unprecedented manner. Satellite communications provide connectivity across the globe. Navigation on land, at sea and in the air relies on space-based positioning, navigation and timing services. Earth observation satellites provide data for weather forecasts, land survey, and the monitoring of environmental and climatic changes. The reliable and secure provision of space services matters to everyone and all States, space-faring or not, as we all use space.

Yet the secure use of space is under threat. Due to their high vulnerability and relevance for civilian as well as military activities, space assets of all kind may become targets in future conflicts. Conflict in space would not only affect the targeted state. It may also impact all our civil life, including – to give just one example – essential services such as police or emergency and rescue services that are in many cases reliant on satellite communication and navigation.

It is with great concern that we observe the development and testing of counter-space capabilities, particularly direct-ascent ASAT missiles or highly-maneuverable satellites which may be used for interference or even may have destructive capabilities. Moreover, electromagnetic jamming and cyber-attacks that can disrupt or degrade space systems enable a wide range of destabilizing grey-zone activities.

A fundamental challenge for space security is the inherent dual-use nature of space technologies. Capabilities and technologies that are essential for preserving the free and

sustainable use of outer space – such as active debris removal or on-orbit servicing – might also be misused with the aim to destroy or impair space assets of others.

The dual-use nature of space technologies in combination with a lack of communication and transparency regarding operations, doctrines and intentions significantly increases the risk of misperception, miscalculation and unintended escalation.

In view of particularly the dual-use concern and potential misuse of space capabilities, traditional arms control approaches of limiting or prohibiting certain objects or weapons don't solve the problem.

We are convinced that the most pragmatic and realistic way to address all relevant threats and security risks is to develop and implement norms, rules and principles for responsible space behaviors and other transparency and confidence-building measures. This will increase security and predictability, reduce risks of misperceptions and escalation into conflict, and contribute directly to preventing an arms race in outer space.

Mr Chair, we see several areas with an urgent need to agree on norms of behaviors. One of them is the testing of anti-satellite missiles leading to creation of space debris. In this vein, we highly welcome and fully support the US self-commitment not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing that was announced on 18 April.

Germany advocates for a universal norm banning such action. We see the US-commitment as a good basis for taking this forward in this OEWG. Further areas with a need to agree on norms are rendez-vous and close-proximity operations, interference with the control of space systems and critical services, but also TCBM such as increased communication, consultation, transparency and improved space situational awareness for better verification and attribution.

In this OEWG we should aim to increase the common understanding on threats and security risks in outer space, to identify what constitutes irresponsible and responsible behaviors and to agree on first norms of responsible behaviors.

Ultimately, this might pave the way for a comprehensive, effective and verifiable legally-binding instrument designed to cover the relevant threats related to outer space.

In fact, voluntary measures have in many instances paved the way to the drafting of new treaties. The Outer Space Treaty is a good example, being based itself on preceding, non-legally binding UNGA resolutions.

We therefore call on all states to constructively engage in the incremental and inclusive process offered by this Open-Ended Working Group.