

UN Open-Ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats

First session (Geneva, 09 to 13 May, 2022)

Statement by the Delegation of Brazil

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Flávio S. Damico

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr Hellmut Lagos, on your election as chair of this open-ended working group. A seasoned disarmament expert, with ample previous experience chairing various international bodies devoted to outer space security and sustainability, makes you an invaluable asset to this OEWG.

Mr. Chairman,

Hardly the importance of outer space can be overemphasized. Increasingly, satellites are essential components of almost all types of critical infrastructure on Earth. Space-based assets are of increased importance for societies and economies of all countries in a wide range of activities, such as global communications, imaging, environment monitoring and national security. Global positioning systems alone have spawned entire economic sectors and remain their indispensable backbone.

This increasing reliance on space has heightened concerns with the threat that outer space might be converted into an arena for conflict, especially owing to the development of offensive space capabilities by several States. Any conflict in space would seriously endanger the prospects for the sustainable use of Earth's orbits for peaceful purposes for generations to come.

The subject matter of this OEWG is therefore a matter of profound concern for all States, regardless of their level of capabilities in space. All of us would be profoundly affected if such a catastrophic scenario were to ever materialize.

Mr. Chairman,

As a developing country with considerable space capabilities and aspirations to become a full spacefaring nation, it is in Brazil's utmost interest that space remain peaceful, stable, safe and accessible to all.

As part of its diplomatic contribution towards those goals, Brazil has, in recent years, chaired three multilateral processes related to outer space issues – that is, the subsidiary body of the CD on PAROS, the UN GGE on further practical measures on

PAROS and the 62nd session of COPUOS, where the Guidelines on Long-term Sustainability (LTS) were adopted by consensus. Our delegation is, therefore, fully aware of the challenges ahead of us.

Mr. Chairman,

In Brazil's view, the establishment of this OEWG stems from the recognition that the existing international regime on space security is insufficient to address current threats and risks, and that its further development is an urgent task that can be delayed no further.

In any event, fortunately, we are not operating in a legal vacuum. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST) provides an important bedrock of general principles for stability and sustainability in the use of outer space still valid, relevant and important today.

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) has also achieved considerable progress in mitigating safety-related threats to space sustainability, including through the adoption of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and the Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (LTS Guidelines).

On the security side, some progress has also been achieved, especially through the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the recommendations of the 2013 GGE on transparency and confidence building measures.

Unfortunately, our efforts towards achieving the long-standing goal of negotiating a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race within the Conference on Disarmament have fallen short. This goal has remains elusive for more than 40 years, in light of recurring – and possibly chronic – stalemates. It is our view that much of this collective failure can be attributed to a dearth of mutual trust among major space powers.

Against this background, the current OEWG represents an opportunity to make progress towards that goal through a “bottom-up” approach, by working on the gradual development of norms, rules and principles and on their implementation. Brazil hopes that this process will help us arrive at common understandings on what constitutes responsible behavior in outer space and build much-needed mutual trust, thus paving the way for a future binding instrument to supplement the existing legal framework.

Mr. Chairman,

In response to the request made by resolution 75/36, the national views compiled in the Secretary General's report A/76/77 provide a good basis for the work of this OEWG. In our national submission, Brazil outlined its views on a range of behaviors that are understood to be responsible, irresponsible and threatening.

In general terms, lack of transparency and failure to properly notify space activities create an environment prone to misinterpretation and escalation of potential conflict. Full implementation of existing TCBMs would render space activities, both in orbit and on Earth, more transparent and predictable, and less prone to misinterpretation. Sharing information that enables broad space situational awareness also contributes to transparency and trust.

As regards irresponsible and threatening behavior, Brazil believes the OEWG should address issues such as the conduct of *rendez-vous* and proximity operations (RPOs) without prior warning and consent. Such activities raise suspicions, spread mistrust and are likely to trigger the adoption of counter measures by affected States.

The possibility of interference with satellite systems (jamming, spoofing and cyberattacks), especially in cases leading to permanent loss of functionality of control of space assets, are also a major threat to space security.

Last but not least, the testing, development and use of destructive anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons stands as the most serious threat to the security and sustainability of outer space. Such weapons are one of the key drivers of mistrust and instability in space, and their testing generates significant persistent debris, leading to the contamination of the orbital environment and to heightening collision risks.

In this regard, we take note with appreciation the announcement of a unilateral moratorium of direct-ascent ASAT testing by the United States. This is a first step. We hope it to be not only reciprocated by all States with capabilities in this field but also extended to other types of such weapons. Brazil believes that the time has come for a ban on all destructive anti-satellite tests. This can be achieved by means of a multilateral moratorium leading up to a formal prohibition to be enshrined in a future legally binding framework.

Mr. Chairman,

Considering the importance of guaranteeing broader access to the benefits of space technology to a wider range of countries, Brazil understands that this group should also discuss the issue of capacity building and information sharing, focusing on the needs of developing countries.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, Brazil stands ready to support your efforts in steering this OEWG towards a successful and substantive outcome, which we hope will become a crucial step in the development of the international space regime.

Thank you.