



Statement by the Delegation of the Holy See to the first session of the  
**“Open-ended working group on reducing space threats”**  
**Item 5 - General debate**  
*Geneva, 13 May 2022*

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Delegation of the Holy See has been in a “listening” mode during this first session. We are grateful to other States for providing their positions. As a matter of fact, we did not intend to take the floor, but we have been encouraged to share some general remarks by the richness of the discussion. In particular, we found it useful to address the already existing international treaties, as this provides an indication of what is still lacking at the level of governance to reduce threats.

Mr. Chair,

The first astronauts who looked out of the porthole at the blue dot that is our beautiful planet – our Common Home, must have felt an overwhelming emotion of unity and a sense of belonging to the one human family. Indeed, all of humanity shares a common living space along with the wonders and vulnerabilities that go with this inescapable fact. The harmony of celestial bodies and their relationship with the Earth condition several of our daily activities and hence the importance of cooperation and fair regulation of outer space activities.

Indeed, it is not by chance that this is the objective of the lofty ambition enshrined in Article 1 of the 1967 Outer Space treaty, which affirms that “the exploration and use of outer space [...] shall be the province of all mankind.”

It is interesting that during the discussions this week, we have heard some delegations and panelists drawing a parallel between the outer space and the digital realm. Our Delegation wishes to reaffirm that a global commons approach to the digital realm makes eminent sense in order to prevent lawlessness and promote the common good, just as it does in outer space. In the outer space, just as in the cyberspace, we also have common responsibilities. There are fundamental limits that must be observed in the interests of all members of the human family.

Mr. Chair,

Our interactions will prove to be beneficial in the measure that we can agree on shared norms to guide us. In this regard, the Holy See intends to present a position paper during the next sessions of this open-ended working group. Here, we deem it useful to propose some general ethical guidelines that we consider important:

- 1) The outer space is a common good (in Latin, *res communis*). It would be in the interest of all not to reproduce in the outer space the mistakes that were committed on Earth such as pollution and reckless exploitation of resources. The most advanced States – or private actors - have no right to impose their supremacy in the outer space or to appropriate resources for individual economic or military interests. Once again, the outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies are the common heritages of all States.
- 2) The outer space has to be preserved as a domain where peace has to be maintained and where relations among States should be guided by cooperation for scientific purposes and not confrontation. In this regard, the promotion of joint scientific projects would be a good way to turn threats into opportunities, guided by the principle of human fraternity.

- 3) In this regard, one of the threats is that the outer space is becoming increasingly polluted by debris coming from the destruction of satellites. It is important to note here that the astronomical research – the science! - can be severely hampered by the presence of all this debris, which unfortunately is already the case, as well as by the consequences of the militarization of the outer space as well as by activities from Earth.

Mr. Chair,

These are just a few points on which we intend to elaborate during the next sessions of this open-ended working group. At a time of heightened international tensions, building trust becomes increasingly important. We have the opportunity and the wisdom to preserve a place where arms race is prevented. Let us be guided by the interests of the common good and by the principle of human fraternity in the conduct of all our activities in outer space and on Earth, with due regard for the corresponding interests of all States!

Thank you.