

UN Open-Ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules, and Principles of Responsible Behaviours

2nd Session, 12 September 2022

Statement of the Republic of Korea on Topic 1

Mr. Chair,

Let me first assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts. You successfully organized the first meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), which provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of the existing international legal and normative frameworks concerning threats arising from State behaviors with respect to outer space. We also saw clear convergence toward a more strengthened framework in order to effectively address space security concerns and rapid technological developments. We thank you for your concise summary, which well captured the week's discussion and look forward to continuing our work under your able leadership

Mr. Chair,

With ever-increasing actors, activities, interdependency, and ever-progressing technology, we should stop repeating what we have done in past decades. Instead, we call for a more forward-looking, action-oriented discussion with a sense of urgency. We would very much like to see this OEWG come up with concrete recommendations, as stipulated in Resolution 76/231, which gave birth to this OEWG.

I would like to reiterate my delegation's basic position that any activities 'intended' to destroy, damage, deny, disturb, or degrade other States' space assets should be deemed as a threat. Space threats include, but are not limited to, the arms race in space. The intention is key in defining a threat, but we also

understand that this is difficult to identify.

Therefore, the ROK government believes that defining space threats based on the action and behavior rather than the capability and object itself is more appropriate. Focusing only on the arms race risks focusing on the capability and object itself, thus not covering all the threats in outer space. Failure to define challenges that we face would lead to response failure.

Also, a significant increase of actors, the progress of technology, inherent dual-use characteristics of space systems, and a high possibility of miscalculation and miscommunication call for a holistic and comprehensive approach to defining threats.

The Cold War has left many traces in the history of multilateralism. A focus on the arms race and traditional arms control approach would be some examples of those traces. With the advent of the new space era and the constant failure of past decades, Korea believes that a threat discussion based on a behavior-based approach can generate some practical and realistic actions. These actions may not seem enough for some countries. However, leaving the vacuum of norms, principles, and regulations unattended would be more detrimental than doing what can be done.

Mr. Chair,

This week's discussion will be a starting point to identify challenges needing a response. Korea hopes that we will be able to find common ground on defining space threats and share what most Member States consider pressing threats. We will be able to have in-depth discussion on what activities or behaviours can be regarded as threat to space security, but please allow me to highlight some of the areas that my delegation is particularly interested in and sees merit for further work.

Korea is of the view that destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing is one of the significant threats from earth to space, as it creates long-lived space debris and can endanger any satellite or human in space. In this context, we welcome once again the U.S. commitment not to conduct those tests and welcome the relay of such commitments in the international community as an example of responsible behaviour.

Non-kinetic physical attacks and electronic attacks to space systems is another area that we would like to bring attention to the international community. Lasers and uplink jammers, in particular, can directly or indirectly result in damages in space systems and ROK government believes that this would negatively affect the security of space systems.

We would like to bring your special attention to rendezvous and proximity operation, RPO. While RPO operation is regarded as important for ensuring the sustainability of outer space activities, such capabilities are inherently of dual use and could be used to damage, degrade or destroy a satellite. It is also noted that any satellite capable of carrying out rendezvous and proximity operations and placed in the same orbit as another satellite could be regarded as a threat.

Increasing space debris is also of concern to us. However, we are mindful of the discussion taking place within COPUOS and the very useful guidelines that came out following the decades of discussion. We are in favor of avoiding overlaps but we also see the merit of considering space debris from threat perspective within the OEWG.

Mr. Chair,

Taking this opportunity, I would like to introduce Korea's recent activities in space security cooperation briefly. Korea In this context, Korea is strongly committed to enhancing the safety, stability, and sustainability of space.

Therefore, we co-organized a virtual conference on May 23 and 24 with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and Secure World Foundation (SWF) to foster dialogue towards a common understanding of threats and responsible behaviours within countries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). We also hope this 2nd meeting can be more inclusive and universal, with more countries actively joining the discussion. Our summary report of this conference is available through the OEWG website.

I am also happy to share that space security will be one of two topics of this year's ROK-UN Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues, which will be held in Seoul on 3rd and 4th of November. We hope this conference can serve as a platform for dynamic and frank discussions on space security issues rapidly unfolding in the face of new and emerging challenges in the international security environment.

With these remarks, we look forward to a fruitful discussion and hope this second meeting will be more inclusive and universal, with more countries actively joining the discussion.

Thank you. /End/