Statement by Ambassador Anna Maj Hultgård, Head of Delegation, Sweden

Thank you Chair,

As this is the first time my delegation takes the floor allow me to congratulate you on the successful chairmanship, thank all those involved in the preparations and briefly introduce myself.

I am Ambassador at Large at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Arms Control. I will engage actively in aspects of Outer Space Affairs, including this process. I look forward to work with you all. As does the whole Swedish delegation.

Sweden aligns itself fully with the EU statement in all its aspects.

Sweden regards outer space as a global common, to be used for the benefit of all.

We underline the applicability of international law, including the UN Charter, to activities in outer space, as reflected in article 3 of the Outer Space Treaty.

When developing, planning and executing space activities, States must do so in accordance with their obligations under international law.

Sweden is strongly committed to strengthening international security and stability and to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which is essential for safeguarding the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes. We have supported resolution 75/36 establishing this
Open-ended working group and we continue to support its work and progress.

Agreeing on voluntary norms of responsible behaviour constitute the best way forward at this moment, without excluding the possibility of future legally binding measures.

To find a common understanding against which to measure State activities will contribute to building transparency, confidence and security and reducing threats and risks of misperception, miscalculation and unintended escalation of conflict.

As a champion for the full, equal and meaningful participation and representation of women in all aspects of disarmament and arms control, Sweden likewise welcomes such an approach in the discussions on reducing space threats through responsible behaviours. I commend UNIDIR and Australia Perm Rep for organising a side event earlier today on “why space security needs gender equality”.

Sweden also wishes to underline our welcoming of commitments made by the US and others not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing (ASAT) as a norm for responsible behaviour in outer space, thereby contributing to safety, security and long-term sustainability of space activities.

Mr Chair, ahead of the discussions during this session, Sweden would like to make the following initial comments:

There is a need to avoid deliberate and unintentional creation of space debris. The growing number of orbital debris presents a challenge to our use of space. The risks of collisions in orbit are ever increasing, and with an increasing number of objects in orbit, the margins for error are diminishing.

Conflicts in space, deliberate or as a result of misunderstanding or misperception, risks a swift deterioration of the space environment, potentially both placing vital spacecraft at risk and threaten our long-term use of space.
We believe that misunderstandings, misperceptions and conflict can and should be avoided, and the present working group is an important step in that direction.

It is vital that we succeed if we are to keep space free for use in the long term.

New technology is also changing the way we utilise space. Emerging services such as on-orbit servicing and debris removal are important developments for a sustainable use of space. However, as they are dual use in their nature, it is important that we develop the right framework that can facilitate its use while still keeping perceived threats and the risk of conflict at a minimum.

Sweden believes that the following security threats and risks to space systems deserve our immediate attention:

The use of kinetic force against space objects, with the associated creation of space debris.

Rendez-vous and proximity operations that are conducted in a non-transparent manner, without proper communication or consent.

Non-kinetic actions against space systems that may damage vital functions, cause a loss of operations of a satellite, disturb or disrupt space-based services or otherwise jeopardize the safety and security of people, goods, or infrastructure.

Mr Chair, my delegation with experts stands ready to engage during this session and coming sessions and offers our full support to the important work ahead.

I thank you!