

PREFACE

The conference on “Safeguarding Space Security: Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space” is indeed timely. Over the years, much has been achieved in ensuring the use of outer space for the benefit of humankind. To mention only a few examples, the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Underwater, the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (known as the Outer Space Treaty) and the 1975 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space are important milestones. Likewise, the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies and the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques are significant achievements in the ongoing efforts to reserve the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes for the good of all.

Yet, while elements of an international legal framework have been put in place, the key problem of the prohibition of deployment of weapons in outer space has not been solved in a comprehensive manner. Prevention of an arms race in outer space—better known under its acronym PAROS—continues to be an urgent challenge. Despite important efforts, such as the joint Sino-Russian working paper in 2002, *Possible Elements for a Future International Legal Agreement on the Prevention of the Deployment of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects*, and notwithstanding the considerable support to an international agreement banning the weaponization of outer space, we have reached an impasse.

As Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, I believe it is critically important that this body, drawing on its considerable knowledge and expertise, meets its responsibilities and starts considering the issue of PAROS. Indeed, at the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament that took place in March 2005, several high-level dignitaries stressed the importance and the urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space.

The political, economic and military significance of space continues to increase, involving a growing number of civil and military actors. The use of space for scientific research purposes has yielded unprecedented achievements and has provided the impetus for the development of technologies that benefit all of us. At the same time, space generates tens of billions of dollars in revenues for the private sector. As of 2005, space-based assets are rapidly becoming part of our critical national and international infrastructure. They are indispensable to modern information and communication, forecasting and navigation—to mention only a few well-known examples that have a considerable impact on international economic relations.

As our collective dependence upon such space-based assets has grown, so too have legitimate concerns about the security of these assets. This has stimulated an important debate about the nature of space security. Indeed, we have arrived at a point where there are serious concerns about the preservation of outer space for “peaceful purposes” and a real need to exchange views on the extent of the challenges—and possible solutions. The continuing militarization and moves toward the eventual weaponization of space—whether it is because it is seen to be necessary, or even “inevitable”, in order to protect valuable and vulnerable assets, or whether it is to control and dominate the “high frontier”—must be addressed through fresh thinking and increased awareness.

Important questions call for a thorough debate. For example, how can we most effectively balance civil, commercial and military space interests against the need to ensure that our activities in space today will not threaten our secure use of space tomorrow? How can we be assured that space will be maintained for peaceful purposes as defined by our collective obligations under the Outer Space Treaty? How can we assure the security of our space assets? I trust that the discussions during the conference will contribute to formulating answers to these essential questions and will help promote awareness of the necessity to address urgently the challenge of preventing an arms race in outer space.

I should like to thank the Governments of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation, the Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Research and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for jointly organizing this important event. It is my hope that these debates may contribute to stimulating consideration in the

Conference on Disarmament of the need to ensure the use of outer space for peaceful purposes. This is important not only to the Conference on Disarmament—but for the security of the world.

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