

Agenda Item 8 – “Space Debris”

The proliferation of space debris poses a serious risk to the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities. It is vital to protect outer space environment when our lives on earth depend on space assets. All states carrying out space activities should behave in a responsible manner to prevent the increase in the number of space debris.

There are a number of ways to tackle the issue of space debris. One way is to respect and implement international rules. Japan welcomes the adoption of the LTS Guidelines, which outline ways to mitigate space debris. We encourage all states to properly implement the LTS Guidelines and Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines.

Another way to address the issue of space debris is research and development of related technology. Japan develops technology for the measurement, monitoring, characterization and accumulation of the orbital and physical properties of space objects and debris. Our SSA system will be in operation no later than FY 2023 including new MOD’s radar, JAXA’s refurbished optical telescope and upgraded radar. Furthermore, Ministry of Defense is moving forward with a plan to launch a SSA satellite. Moreover, Japan investigates ways to remove large size debris. JAXA will cooperate with a private firm for research and development, as well as fostering industrial competitiveness of ADR.

National policy and regulatory framework for space activities also offer a key solution to limit the generation of space debris. Let us briefly touch upon our example. The Japanese government organized a “task force” under the leadership of the Minister of State for Space Policy, comprised of the related State Ministers and the President of JAXA to discuss the efficient measures tackling the issue of space debris.

Japan enforced Space Activities Act in 2018 to efficiently authorize and supervise non-governmental entities’ space activities. Under this law, the Government of Japan examines non-governmental entities’ plan to launch or control satellites within the Japanese jurisdiction. All plans are required to satisfy criteria such as prevention of on-orbit break-up and post-mission disposal thereby reduce the number of space debris. Furthermore, JAXA has its own space debris mitigation standard. JAXA standard was among the world first space debris mitigation guidelines developed. The current JAXA standard provides in-depth technical procedures.

While the effort of each member state is important, the international cooperation is also crucial. Countries with rich experience should share their experience and practices. Based on the rich experience of space development, Japan has been actively engaged in and led the discussion of international rating scheme on debris mitigation measures of satellites in the World Economic Forum (WEF) to encourage industry to voluntarily tackle to mitigate the increase in the number of space debris with the Space Sustainability Rating (SSR).

For the sustainable use of the outer space environment, Japan remains committed in tackling the issue of space debris. We are keen to raise awareness in collaboration with international partners. At the lunch time on Thursday, 6 February, Japanese Ambassador Hikihara and Ms. Dipippo of UNOOSA will sign a joint statement on space debris. There will be a signing ceremony followed by a seminar discussion and a reception. We would like to welcome all Member States to attend this event and look forward to lively discussion.

Thank you for your attention.