

China's Perspective on the Promotion of Security and Sustainability of Outer Space

Outer space is the common heritage of mankind. Exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes is the common cause and in the common interests of all countries. With the rapid development of outer space activities, challenges to the security and sustainability of outer space have also increased and become an important issue concerning the interests of all countries. On this issue China has the following views and positions.

1. Demilitarization is the fundamental guarantee to maintain security and sustainability of outer space.

The security and sustainability of outer space is facing multiple threats, such as a deterioration of the space environment, space congestion and space debris. However, the most fundamental threat is the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. Outer space should be the new frontier of human wellbeing instead of a new killing field. If we cannot ensure that outer space is used exclusively for peaceful purposes, the security and sustainability of outer space will be out of the question.

China firmly supports the arms control process for outer space.

In 2008, China and the Russian Federation jointly submitted to the Conference on Disarmament a Draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT), and updated it based on feedback from other parties in 2014. The draft PPWT has received support from many countries. China hopes that other parties will show the political will to start negotiations based on the draft PPWT, and achieve an international treaty to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space as early as possible.

In 2014, the draft resolution jointly sponsored by China, Russia and other countries entitled “No first placement of arms in outer space” (A/RES/69/32) was adopted with overwhelming support. This fully reflects the common aspiration of the international community to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

China believes that appropriate and feasible Transparency and Confidence Building Measures(TCBMs) in outer space activities will help enhance mutual trust and reduce miscalculations. In this regard, the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on TCBMs in 2013 represents important progress and provides an important reference for all countries. China welcomes this achievement, and believes that while TCBMs can serve as a useful supplement to the prevention of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, they should not

substitute negotiations on an outer space arms control treaty.

2. The rule of law is an important foundation for maintaining the security and sustainability of outer space.

To maintain the security and sustainability of outer space, the international community needs to define through uniform rules what can or cannot be done. All states should earnestly comply with international rules and judge right and wrong, resolve differences and promote cooperation in accordance with rules.

First, the outer space activities of States should be conducted in line with the UN Charter and the relevant treaties on outer space. All countries should act in accordance with the rules, fully fulfill their international obligations, exercise their rights in good faith, and be the practitioners and defenders of international rules governing outer space.

Second, we must advance with the times and constantly improve the system of outer space law and rules. Since 1979, the international community hasn't concluded any new outer space treaty. Outer space law has lagged behind the development of space activities. New issues such as space debris, space traffic management, and the commercial exploitation of outer space need to be properly regulated. States should actively support and participate in discussions under the UN auspices, in particular work of the Legal

Subcommittee of Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to discuss and handle the new legal challenges .

Third, steadily develop “soft laws” on outer space, and give full play to its role. Declarations, principles and guidelines on outer space adopted by United Nations should be the guidance to the space activities of all states. The "Guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities (LTS) ", developed under the auspices of COPUOS is comprehensive and covering many new issues, and will be a groundbreaking soft law with great value in regulating outer space activities and promoting their sustainability. China welcomes the significant progress made in the negotiations on the LTS guidelines and will continue participating actively in the way forward.

3. The United Nations is the authoritative platform for promoting the security and sustainability of outer space.

In the nearly 60 years of human space activities, the United Nations has played an important, irreplaceable role in establishing and improving the system of space governance, and provided a basic institutional framework for the security and sustainability of outer space. Under the new circumstances, the United Nations, as the most authoritative and universal international organization, should continue to play a central role in this area.

China supports COPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament, the First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly, as well as other institutions to play their respective roles and appropriately enhance coordination in a joint effort to promote outer space governance. The year of 2018 will mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the First United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The international community should take this opportunity to summarize achievements, identify challenges, and plan for the future in order to increase the influence and improve the implementation capacity of the United Nations in the field of outer space, so that it may better lead the international community in promoting security and sustainability in outer space.

4. International cooperation is the essential way to promote outer space security and sustainability.

The security and sustainability of outer space concern the common interests of all countries, and no country has the ability to address and deal with it alone. All states should bear in mind that we are in a community of interests in outer space, and we need to deliberate and govern together, and jointly meet challenges.

Space governance should be open and inclusive. Space governance cannot be monopolized by a few countries, introducing their own rules as international rules. More countries, in particular

developing countries, should be encouraged to participate in and fully express their views on outer space rule-making. The making of any rules should take into account the needs of countries at different development stages, and should not hinder the participation of developing countries in outer space activities.

We should adhere to multilateralism within the UN framework. Only arrangements reached by consensus through equal and democratic multilateral discussions can have vitality and authority, and are capable of practical and effectively implementation.

International cooperation in space technology development, application and capacity-building should be further strengthened. Cooperation is vital to promote and spread the benefits of space technology among all countries, as well as enhance mutual understanding and trust. In this regard, developed space-faring nations should help developing countries enhance their space capabilities and share with them the space exploration “dividend”.

China is a staunch supporter of security and sustainability of outer space. The peaceful use of outer space and opposition to the militarization of outer space has been enshrined in Chinese law. China has introduced Administrative Measures on Space Debris Mitigation, and conducted active debris removal experiments. China

actively helps developing countries enjoy the benefits of outer space in such fields as communication, navigation, disaster reduction, and space education. China also actively carries out international cooperation and exchanges to enhance transparency. In March this year, China and the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs signed Framework Agreement concerning Cooperation on the Utilization of China's Space Station. In May this year, China and the United States held the first outer space security dialogue. China is willing to work together with the international community to make greater contributions to promoting the security and sustainability of outer space.