

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON SAFETY, SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY  
OF OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF SPACE GOVERNANCE  
AND SPACE SECURITY

**Mr. Georgy Mikhno, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian  
Federation to the United Nations (Vienna)**

**Ms. Olga Volynskaya, Roscosmos**

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Various aspects of safety of space operations and sustainability of outer space activities have been on the international agenda since the very inception of the space era. However, the importance of their comprehensive qualitative analysis in their entirety has come to the fore only in recent years. Both established and emerging space actors share common interests and practical motivations to assess and forecast the risks associated with space activities, and to elaborate effective, viable and commonly acceptable solutions to minimize or eliminate such risks. It is equally essential to consider carefully the conditions giving rise to those risks, as well as international and national policies and methods capable of providing such solutions.

The context for considering this range of problems varies from one platform for international negotiations to another, including the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the First and Fourth Committees, the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and other fora. Undoubtedly, the most efficient resolution of issues relating to the security and long-term sustainability of space activities in terms of their uniform identification, more accurate interpretation and systematic analysis.

At the same time, it is the current political context that determines States' intentions with regard to the use of space. Successfully ensuring safety in space and of space activities requires the exchange of reliable, accurate, sufficiently complete and verifiable information in an agreed format, as well as mutual understanding concerning policies, legitimate methods and technical procedures to

facilitate the fair and effective implementation of measures to do away with non-operational space objects and fragments of space debris.

From the point of view of ensuring the safety of space activities, it is important that: (a) Orbital data used for making decisions on avoiding a possible collision of an operational satellite with another orbital object are reliable, meet the requisite level of precision and correspond in form and content to specific standards; and (b) Procedures for obtaining orbital data and the methods for assessing accuracy are agreed between the participants in information exchanges with regard to the transparency of the models used, the attitude to the assessment of accuracy and other factors.

In the long-term perspective, it is vital to establish strong and clear prospects for cooperation in this regard. The creation of an institutional basis for international practice in this area, in the form of guiding principles and the corresponding implementation mechanisms, which is underway now under the auspices of the UN COPUOS, requires the development of specific systemic approaches at both the national and the international levels. Collective progress and adoption of considered and authoritative decisions would be substantially facilitated by ensuring that the work in the international fora mentioned above on ensuring safety of space activities is interconnected.

In the meantime, it is in the interests of the whole international space community not to rush with the adoption of specific solutions in a form of guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities in order to avoid unjustifiably hasty decisions that have not been fully thought through, particularly with regard to issues concerning the safety of space operations and security of outer space activities in general. It should also be ensured that any future global solutions to the problems considered shall be in full conformity with the established provisions, as well as fundamental principles of international law and international space law.