

NON-PAPER BY THE SECRETARIAT

Proposed concept note on the joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability

A) Mandate

By its resolution 73/72 and 73/91, the General Assembly (op 10 and op 15, respectively): *Decides* to convene a joint half-day panel discussion of the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee) and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) to address possible challenges to space security and sustainability, and to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-fourth session, under the item entitled “General and complete disarmament”, a sub-item entitled “Joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability.

B) Background for the discussion

The panel discussion will consider the general topic of possible challenges to space security and sustainability. The discussion is taking place amidst a convergence of pending decisions within United Nations bodies, in Vienna, Geneva and New York, on the future of efforts aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and in preserving outer space as a realm free from active hostilities and weaponization. It is also taking place against a backdrop of rapidly expanding private, commercial, civil and military use of outer space. The development and demonstration of new space-based capabilities with possible dual-use applications (e.g. rendezvous and proximity operations, active debris removal, etc.) also point to a growing need for greater collaboration on space traffic and situational awareness.

Deliberations at expert level have recently facilitated both remarkable convergence and some of the most in-depth discussions on these matters to have taken place within the United Nations. These have included the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space Scientific and Technical Subcommittee working group on the long-term sustainability of outer space, the groups of governmental experts on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, subsidiary body 3 of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament and Working Group 2 of the Disarmament Commission.

It can be observed that processes focused on disarmament and international security have been most effective when they can draw upon and integrate expertise from experts who primarily engage on peaceful uses of outer space and sustainability. Processes focused on safety and sustainability have also made significant progress on addressing aspects that intersect with traditional security concerns, especially in the area of transparency and confidence-building measures. Work in each of these areas has been enriched and supported by deepening engagement from non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector.

In light of these trends United Nations entities, including the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research have established and maintained effective collaboration in support of all inter-related work streams. The 2019 joint panel discussion is an opportunity for Member States to reflect on experiences across the work streams in Vienna, Geneva and New York, discuss possible ways for jointly advancing inter-related objectives, including through possible joint expert processes,

and consider other ways for sustaining dialogue between the various communities and transforming the joint session into an outcome-oriented platform.

C) Indicative themes of the panel discussion in support of an interactive dialogue

In order to promote a focused and structured interactive dialogue, the following indicative themes and related indicative questions are suggested:

1) Identification of issues that intersect with both space sustainability and security

Which substantive issues concern both space sustainability and security and how are they respectively viewed from both perspectives?

2) Taking stock of the status of recent United Nations processes on space sustainability and security

How can recent international work on space sustainability and security be taken forward?

3) Exchange of views on the characteristics of expert processes in the various United Nations bodies

How do expert processes in Vienna, New York and Geneva differ in terms of structure, procedure, costs and secretariat support and how can the most effective practices be leveraged to facilitate processes concerning both space sustainability and security?

4) Identification of issues where joint, hybrid or other novel approaches could advance long-sought objectives for space sustainability and security

What overlapping issues could be addressed through novel approaches and how can disarmament and international security process take better advantage of Vienna-based expertise?

D) Proposed structure of the panel discussion and interactive dialogue

The Co-Chairs of the First and Fourth Committees will open the panel discussion.

Introductory remarks will be delivered by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and by the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs (5-10 min each).

Panel presentations will be delivered by up to four invited panellists from representatives drawn from each segment of the broader space community, including government, civil society and the private sector (10 min each).

There will be Q&A after each presentation and a concluding interactive dialogue with delegations.

The Co-Chairs of the First and Fourth Committees will close the panel discussion.