

Agenda Item 6: Ways and Means of Maintaining Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes

Mr. Chair and distinguished delegates,

India is a firm advocate of the adoption of the UN principles that govern peaceful uses of outer space. As a party to all major international space treaties and regulations, India is committed to promoting responsible space operations.

Mr. Chair,

The emerging space capabilities are rapidly transforming the outer space environment. Currently, the number of space objects shows a steeply growing trend. Therefore, augmenting Space Situational Awareness (SSA) capabilities commensurate with this tremendous growth is essential to operate space assets safely and sustainably. In addition, it is also required to assess carefully the long-term benefits and risks of space activities through relevant technical and scientific studies.

India recognizes the importance of Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) to eliminate any misinterpretation of intents while operating in an increasingly congested outer space. Voluntary exchange of data, tools, knowledge base, best practices and experiences are some of the recommended measures that promote global space situational awareness capabilities and aid sustainable space operations for peaceful uses of outer space.

Mr. Chair,

India continues its efforts to build space object observational capabilities and aims for further enhancement through relevant data sharing and collaborations. In all Indian space missions, the space debris mitigation guidelines as recommended by the UN-COPUOS and IADC are followed to the maximum extent practicable. Proactive measures are undertaken to improve compliance, such as de-orbiting of upper stages of rocket bodies at the end of mission. ISRO's PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM) is yet another innovative approach to contain debris growth. By hosting multiple payloads for technology demonstrations, it eliminates the need for flying independent small platforms.

The third POEM mission onboard PSLV C58 was de-orbited from the 650km to 350km orbit facilitating its early re-entry and was passivated to remove residual propellants to minimise any accidental breakups. POEM-3 thus demonstrates a practically zero debris mission.

Prior to that, India also undertook measures towards effecting the uncontrolled atmospheric re-entry of Cartosat-2, which was earlier expected to take about 30 years to naturally de-orbit. This was done by lowering the spacecraft's perigee using leftover fuel to comply with international guidelines on space debris mitigation, thus reducing collision risks and ensuring safe end-of-life disposal. The spacecraft

reentered over the Indian Ocean on February 14, 2024, meeting its demise during atmospheric reentry

India's intent to achieve debris free space mission by all Indian space actors, governmental and non-governmental by 2030 was announced in the annual meet of IADC, held at Bengaluru in April 2024. India also invites all other state space actors to join this initiative.

India recognizes the crucial role of UN Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities in promoting sustainable use of outer space for peaceful purposes. India actively participates in the activities of the international bodies working in the domains of space debris mitigation and remediation, space situational awareness, space traffic management, and space sustainability, including in the working group on LTS of outer space activities. India had also provided inputs on the challenges to the long-term sustainability of outer space activities that arise in the context of the safety of spaceflight, especially while operating in the presence of large constellations and small satellites

The Indian Space Policy 2023 addresses the overarching requirements of ensuring safe & sustainable space operations, through a dedicated framework in alignment with the relevant international guidelines. In line with this policy, the required awareness raising programs and hand-holding exercises are undertaken to ensure adherence to safe & sustainable space operations.

Mr. Chair,

In conclusion, India believes that concerted efforts by fostering international cooperation are essential to ensure peaceful utilisation and exploration of outer space for the collective benefit of humankind. India remains committed to playing an active and constructive role in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chair and distinguished delegates, for your kind attention.