

Japan Item 10

“General exchange of information and views on legal mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation and remediation measures, taking into account the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee”

Japan

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The increasing amount of space debris poses a serious threat to the safety, security, sustainability, and stability of outer space activities. It is imperative to acknowledge that the actual increase of space debris continues to outpace previous predictions. -

Japan strongly encourages all States to carry out their space activities in a responsible and cooperative manner to prevent the creation and dissemination of long-lasting orbital debris. To this end, I would like to share some ideas from my government.

Chair,

The first step in effectively addressing our space debris challenges is to respect and comply with existing international norms and guidelines. We encourage all States to properly implement the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and the LTS Guidelines. I would like to highlight the commitment of Japan not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing in line with UNGA resolution 77/41.

To ensure compliance with international norms and guidelines aimed at limiting a new generation of space debris, national policies and regulatory frameworks governing space activities play a key role. Under its “Space Activities Act”, Japan established space debris mitigation requirements for space objects controlled under the jurisdiction of Japan.

Chair,

As Director Ms. Holla-Maini articulated in her statement on Monday, addressing space debris is an urgent and collective endeavor. The world stands

at a critical point, and we need to consider our next steps carefully. Otherwise, we will neither be able to enjoy the benefits of space systems, nor ordinary daily life on Earth in a sustainable way.

This is why Japan is keen to contribute to international cooperation towards rulemaking for both debris mitigation and remediation measures.

With regard to mitigation, we note that many countries are strengthening implementation of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, and these efforts should be encouraged.

On remediation, however, we face particular difficulties. Business and economic incentives in this dimension are low, and regulatory uncertainty is large. Thus, we must intensify our efforts to address the lack of sufficient rules and mechanisms.

Chair,

I wish to expound on two of Japan's national efforts on remediation measures.

The first is on the research and development of active debris removal (ADR). JAXA and Astroscale Japan are collaborating on the first phase of the Commercial Removal of Debris Demonstration (CRD2) project. The demonstration satellite was launched in February of this year and is currently underway to demonstrate ADR technology as Mr. OKADA, CEO of Astroscale Holdings, touched upon in his technical presentation on Wednesday.

The second is that Japan has established national guidelines to ensure safe and transparent operations of on-orbit servicing, including for ADR services.

In order to ensure safety and transparency of ADR, the national guidelines of Japan require entities conducting on-orbit services to obtain consent from the entity which has the authority to oversee the client's object and further require it to share key information in advance of the planned on-orbit service. The CRD2 project has been carried out in compliance with these guidelines, with the Cabinet Office of Japan publishing project details on its website in advance of the service to ensure transparency. Japan stands ready to share its knowledge and expertise with other countries and encourages them to establish similar guidelines for licensing on-orbit servicing.

Chair,

To facilitate international discussions on issues including space debris mitigation and remediation, the Cabinet Office of Japan and the Secure World Foundation will co-host the “Sixth Summit for Space Sustainability” in Tokyo from July 11th to 12th, 2024. We invite all States and stakeholders to participate in these discussions.

Furthermore, we think it is high time for COPUOS and its Subcommittees, as the legitimate body for standard setting, to come up with concrete ideas on the way forward.

Japan believes that COPUOS, with the reliable support of UNOOSA, should not be outpaced by the speed of development of technologies and the accumulation both of residual and emerging challenges. Remediation is a typical example of these challenges.

Therefore, Japan would like to call upon all States to consider a practical way forward to accelerate discussions on the issue of ADR under the framework of COPUOS.

We are considering submitting a non-paper on this issue and look forward to hearing the views of others.

Thank you for your attention.