

**Key Note Address by
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**JOINT PANEL DISCUSSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIRST
COMMITTEE AND FOURTH COMMITTEE**

“Possible Challenges to Space Security and Sustainability”

12 October 2017

Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure to address this joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on the topic of possible challenges to space security and sustainability. I can confirm fruitful cooperation and coordination efforts with the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The organization of the joint effort of the First and Fourth Committees in 2015 and now today, is also proof of a joint commitment by our offices. This panel discussion today follows-up on the joint ad hoc meeting held in 2015, but in addition provides a different and innovative format which I hope will contribute to a continued forward looking dialogue on several key concern to space security and sustainability, including perspectives given by industry, private sector, academia and civil society.

Distinguished Delegates,

This year is of historical significance with the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the launch on Sputnik 1 and the 50th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty.

The panel discussion today constitutes a contribution by the First and Fourth Committees to the 50th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty. In this regard it is important to address the fundamental role of this Treaty in the broader perspective of space security. The indicative themes of the programme that my Office developed together with UNODA witness the importance of the Outer Space Treaty to past, present and future space activities.

The Treaty's role in maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation and understanding is paramount. The treaty serves as the constitution for space activities, and it forms the central legal basis for global governance of outer space activities. The Outer Space Treaty as part of the legal regime of outer space provides us with the fundamental principles for upholding legal order in outer space activities.

Distinguished Delegates,

In considering the broader perspective of space security as a fundamental pillar for meeting the objectives of the overarching 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities may reduce mishaps, misinterpretations and miscalculations; foster cooperation; create more predictability; and gather consensus on matters crucial to maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes – at least as a first step in the progressive development of international space law.

We can conclude that the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures (TCBM) in Outer Space Activities – in document A/68/189 - constitutes an unprecedented account.

We have now considerably developed the agenda of TCBMs through the report in document A/AC.105/1116, the Secretary-General report in A/72/65 and Add.1 and we have collected additional contributions from Member States in documents A/AC.105/1145 and Addenda 1 and 2, as well as in previously issued documents A/AC.105/1080 and Addenda 1 and 2, giving us a comprehensive basis for moving ahead.

Distinguished Delegates,

Outer space is a fragile environment where the steps taken by one actor may have an impact on others, including users of space services on Earth. In that sense the broader application of space operations and the increased strategic value of space has resulted in a growing need to enhance the safety of space operations, security of space assets and space systems, including critical infrastructures – which is also core to cyber security concerns -

and in preserving the space environment. The long-term sustainability of outer space activities is key in meeting those concerns.

In the framework of Earth protection, we have to consider also the risks posed by natural hazards, such as from near-Earth objects and by space weather. In this regard, UNOOSA works together with States, international organizations and other relevant entities towards strengthening resiliency and the ability to depend on space systems to respond to the impact of such hazards.

Distinguished Delegates,

UNOOSA is mandated since four decades to maintain the central United Nations Register on Objects Launched into Outer Space, under the obligation of the Registration Convention of 1975. The Register functions as the core mechanism for treaty based transparency and confidence-building. In this regard it is important to recognize the impact of the 2007 General Assembly resolution on registration practice (resolution 62/101) where we note that several States increasingly use the recommendations of that resolution to provide additional and voluntary registration data for the purpose of the UN Register on the change of status of space objects in orbit, information on re-entry events and de-orbiting of space objects and similar information they deem important for the purpose of the registration regime and as appropriate to enhance the safety of space operations.

I mention specifically the registration regime because together with the established procedures of discharging the responsibilities of the Secretary-General under the United Nations treaties and principles on outer space, including the Outer Space Treaty and the principles on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space activities, the Office for Outer Space Affairs is vested with a mandate to assist in global efforts to enhance international governance in the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

In this context UNOOSA stands ready to work with Member States to build appropriate and robust information exchange and notification procedures building upon the long-standing treaty-based Register on Objects Launched into Outer Space and the notification procedures under the United Nations treaties and principles on outer space.

Distinguished Delegates,

COPUOS is in the process of finalizing the preparations for the fiftieth anniversary in 2018 of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, UNISPACE+50.

Overall, we are considering mechanisms for space cooperation and coordination at the international, regional, interregional and national levels towards enhanced and stronger space economy, space society, space accessibility, and space diplomacy for the 21st Century, forming a “Space2030” agenda.

For COPUOS and the Office for Outer Space Affairs, UNISPACE+50 and the process beyond – towards 2030 - is an opportunity to renew and strengthen this unique common platform for cooperation between major space-faring nations and emerging space nations, including by strengthening the important dialogue between governmental and non-governmental actors, industry, private sector, civil society, young people, and the public at large.

The Outer Space Treaty stands at the core of this comprehensive effort at the global level of space diplomacy. I look forward very much to the panel discussion and interactive dialogue today. We have a common interest in maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes – this must be our key objective from a space related perspective in securing peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all humanity.

Thank you for your attention.
