

Statement by Ambassador Fu Cong
at the UNIDIR Space Security Conference

First of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to extend my congratulations on the convening of the conference, extend my appreciation to the host, other sponsors and joint organizers, and welcome to the officials and experts attending this conference.

The annual UNIDIR Conference has become one of the most important platforms for countries to exchange views on space security, and is playing a very positive role in raising awareness, promoting mutual trust and building consensus in this field.

Dear colleagues,

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the UN Conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of Outer Space, which was a benchmark event in the history of global space governance. During the past decades, space technologies have advanced so much that they have actually brought benefits to everyone's daily life. Hence, as a "new frontier", peace, security and stability in space have never received so much attention from international community as today.

With unremitting efforts by the member states, the UN mechanisms have achieved important breakthroughs on the agenda of space this year. The CD established a subsidiary body to hold substantive discussions on PAROS. The UNDC for the first time, put outer space on its agenda, focusing on TCBMs aimed at PAROS, and the UN Secretary General will soon establish a Group of Governmental Experts to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on PAROS, including, inter alia, on the prevention of placement of weapons in outer space.

China welcomes these positive developments. This reflects the importance that the international community attaches to the issue of PAROS and the urgency of preventing the weaponization of outer space. We hope that, like the theme of today's conference, the international community can build on our previous efforts, and truly open the "next chapter" in space security.

China stands ready to work with the international community to enable these mechanisms to achieve tangible results. I would like to share our views in this respect.

First, we should focus on the fundamental threats to space security.

Solutions to space security should be based on the full and objective understanding of the threats we face. One view is that, as more and more players enter space, congestion, debris, and environmental deterioration are the most significant threats to space security. Another view emphasizes that, as the strategic importance of space rises, the risk of space getting weaponized, or even becoming a battlefield is increasing, which will inevitably impact space security and international strategic situation.

While Both views reflect the reality of space security, the threats that are talked about are fundamentally different. The environmental issues in outer space are, to some extent, by-products of space exploration and utilization, and is a development problem. Space weaponization is inflicted by the attempt to seek absolute military superiority, which constitutes a far more fundamental and lethal threat..

It can be imagined that, once weapon systems enter the space, mutual trusts among states would be severely damaged, and an arms race could be inevitable. Once there is confrontation or war in space, activities of peaceful uses could be interrupted, and efforts in improving space environment or reducing debris would be rendered useless. In other words, if we cannot maintain the peaceful nature of space, safety will be out of the question. It is crucial for the international community to reach a common understanding on the different natures of the threats we face.

Second, all mechanisms should work in accordance with its own mandate, while making concerted efforts towards the goal of PAROS.

As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the CD remains the most appropriate venue for the negotiation of an international legally binding instrument on PAROS. From 1985 to 1994, the CD established ad hoc committees to review issues related to PAROS. After that, it carried out several rounds of structural discussions and accumulated a lot of experience and expertise on the related issues. Over the years, many member states have submitted position papers on ways to

prevent an arms race in outer space. The subsidiary body on PAROS may, on the basis of reviewing past proposals, hold in-depth discussions on such issues as the immediate threats of an arms race in outer space, the effectiveness of existing international legal system, and the best legal means to prevent the weaponization of outer space, with a view to accumulating political will and consensus on the commencement of negotiations at the CD as soon as possible.

The purpose of establishing the GGE on PAROS is to put more impetus to the CD. According to the mandate, the group will consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. We should give full play to the advantages of expert level discussion, hold in-depth and concentrated exchanges on existing proposals on the international legally binding instrument, focusing on the scope, definition, key obligations, verification, implementing mechanism of the instrument, with a view to laying foundations for the CD to start negotiation at an early date. Once the CD agrees upon a balanced and comprehensive program of work to start the relevant negotiation, the GGE will conclude its work and submit the results of its deliberations to the CD.

As a multilateral disarmament deliberative body, UNDC plays an important role in promoting disarmament, peace and stability. Inclusion of the agenda item on space in the new deliberative cycle, starting this year, will not only help promote substantive work, but also further consolidate the international consensus on maintaining space security. We hope that the working group will closely follow its mandate, and make practical proposals on TCBMs that helps to achieve the goal of PAROS.

Although the above mechanisms have different mandates, and different agendas, they are all conducive and beneficial to the goal of space security. China will work cooperatively with all parties and play a constructive role in the relevant work.

Thirdly, we should try our best to jump start the negotiation of an international legally binding instrument to keep weapons out of space.

In recent years, there have been some discussions over whether space

security can be most effectively achieved through "hard law" or "soft law." Advocates for "soft law" based their arguments on the difficulties in definitions, scope, and verification that legally binding instruments may involve, and say that implementing TCBMs is a realistic and feasible way forward. There is no denying that, compared to voluntary measures, treaty negotiation may take more time and is more complicated. However, we need to realize that PAROS would be ever harder to realize without a legal instrument. TCBMs can only be a supplement to, but not a replacement of the legal means.

First of all, PAROS is an issue that is closely related the national security. It can only be realized through a legally binding instrument, which is better suited to strike a balance between rights and obligations.

Secondly, a legal instrument is concluded through open and transparent negotiation. It takes into consideration the concerns of all parties , and is binding in nature. Once reached, it must be implemented by all the states parties, which contains inherent stability and fairness.

Thirdly, the existing international legal system contains, to some extent, elements of preventing the weaponization of outer space. However, they are not sufficient in preventing weapons other than WMDs from entering into space. This loophole can only be remedied through a legal instrument.

Dear colleagues,

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the first draft of the China-Russia PPWT. During the past decade, discussions of the draft has been held at the CD and suggestions from other countries have been taken on board. to a maximum degree. PPWT enjoys increasing support from the international community. China hopes that countries could continue to actively participate in the relevant discussions and consolidate the foundation for the start of

negotiations at the CD. China looks forward to working with all countries in our joint effort in maintaining peace, security and sustainability in outer space.

I wish this conference a success.

Thank you.