

Joint Civil Society Statement on Outer Space, 2025

United Nations First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

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Space feels distant, but it touches us every day. Every time you check the weather forecast, transfer money online, or call a loved one overseas, you are depending on space. Satellites knit together the daily life of billions of people, often invisibly. But what is invisible is also fragile. The insecurity that is growing on Earth — active conflicts, the erosion of arms control, the spread of new weapons systems, and a worsening climate of fear and mistrust — is spilling into orbit.

Around the world, many states have taken steps to ensure the safe, secure, and sustainable use of space for future generations through national measures and cooperative initiatives. These efforts are commendable and provide important building blocks for shared security. But national action alone cannot safeguard this common space for humanity, and in many cases, such measures remain fragmented or weak. This gap between national ambition and collective security has left space increasingly vulnerable to growing perceptions of insecurity.

Civil society is deeply concerned that more states are turning to the development of a range of counterspace capabilities in response to perceived space threats, further exacerbating collective insecurity in space. These actions risk further destabilizing the space environment by fueling arms racing and increasing the likelihood of misperceptions and miscalculation. The international community has long sought to maintain outer space free of weapons and armed conflict; a principle at the heart of the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) agenda. Reaffirming and operationalizing that principle is more urgent than ever.

In particular, we are witnessing renewed interest in space-based strategic missile defence interceptors and other orbital weapons concepts — ideas long ago set aside as technically impractical, destabilizing, and self-defeating in the quest for defence. According to the 2025 [Global Counterspace Capabilities Report](#) by Secure World Foundation, at least a dozen states are now pursuing dedicated counterspace programs, ranging from jamming and cyber means to kinetic and on-orbit systems. This expansion increases the risk that all states will be caught in the fallout of an arms race and heightens the urgency to prevent one.

These risks stem not only from high-profile weapons concepts. Non-destructive forms of intentional satellite interference, from jamming, spoofing, and dazzling to cyber intrusions, are occurring with growing frequency both in and outside of armed conflict. Even when

temporary, such interference can disrupt essential civilian services: emergency communications, transport and navigation, electricity grids, financial systems, and the climate and disaster monitoring that billions rely on. For many people, these satellites are lifelines; and lifelines should not become targets. Disrupting these services can have severe humanitarian consequences, including the potential for direct loss of life and injury.

Yet there is hope. Earlier this year, states agreed on an agenda to advance the comprehensive mandate of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) in all its aspects. This approach recognizes that space security cannot be achieved by focusing only on behaviour, or only on legal commitments, or only on capabilities: it requires weaving these strands together. We strongly support this comprehensive agenda as the most credible path to reduce risks and preserve the peaceful uses of space. But the OEWG must not be allowed to stall in endless and counterproductive procedural debate. What is needed now are practical steps that can be developed in parallel and woven into a broader framework.

The burden of action falls on all states. Civil society calls on states to sustain and strengthen the OEWG process, ensuring it remains inclusive, comprehensive, and results oriented. We urge governments to take immediate steps that preserve the peaceful uses of space, including refraining from developing or deploying weapons in outer space and translating political commitments into action through concrete measures such as enhancing transparency, ensuring commitments are observable and verifiable, integrating them into national legislation and operational practice, and demonstrating restraint in military planning.

To preserve outer space as a domain of peaceful use and prevent and reverse an arms race in all its aspects, First Committee delegations should:

- **Strengthen and advance the OEWG's comprehensive agenda** by giving it clear political support and momentum to guide its work. This should include the development of practical measures — such as standards for safe and predictable proximity operations, the establishment of emergency communication channels to reduce the risk of escalation, and advancing shared understandings and risk-reduction measures related to space-based early-warning systems linked to nuclear forces — , safeguards for civilian infrastructure, as well as steps both to prevent the deployment of weapons in orbit and to verify compliance with such commitments.
- **Reaffirm existing legal obligations**, including the prohibition on the placement or use of any weapons of mass destruction in outer space, encourage the universalization and full implementation of the Outer Space Treaty, and commit not to develop capabilities for such purposes.

- **Demonstrate national restraint** by adopting public political commitments such as not to place weapons in orbit, refraining from destructive anti-satellite testing and harmful interference with space objects, and taking steps to ensure that such commitments are clear and observable to others.
- **Advance transparency and confidence-building** as essential enablers of peace and security by promoting the implementation of the 2013 Group of Governmental Experts' recommendations on TCBMs, as reinforced by the 2023 UN Disarmament Commission guidance on their practical application, and by encouraging cooperative practices, including information sharing, notification, and dialogue.
- **Integrate environmental, humanitarian, and societal considerations into space security deliberations** by assessing the consequences of harmful activities — including debris generation and the disruption of services vital to civilian populations — and incorporating these risks into policy, legal, and operational decisions. First Committee delegations should promote common understandings of these risks, minimize their civilian and environmental impacts, and ensure they are fully considered in future negotiations.
- **Ensure inclusive and meaningful participation in space governance processes** by enabling the involvement of states from all regions and at different levels of technological development, as well as civil society, industry, technical experts, and other stakeholders. Efforts should also consider how space conflict could have differentiated impacts across regions, populations, and communities, particularly those historically underrepresented in disarmament fora.
- **Facilitate and expand the role of civil society in space security governance** by supporting its participation in official proceedings, drawing on its technical and policy expertise, and integrating its analysis into efforts to build transparency, accountability, and innovative policy solutions.

Action is also needed beyond this committee. Domestically and through cooperative partnerships, states should:

- **Translate restraint commitments into national policy and practice** by embedding them in operational plans, procurement decisions, and national doctrine.
- **Make political and legal commitments observable and credible** by publishing them in national space security policies, sharing relevant, non-sensitive operational and technical information that helps build confidence and reduce misperceptions, and supporting independent verification measures, including through enhanced space situational awareness (SSA) and data-sharing initiatives.

- **Embed international commitments into national legislation and regulation** to ensure that all space activities — governmental and commercial — align with international law, norms, and voluntary commitments.
- **Lay the groundwork for future arms control** by building the technical and conceptual foundations needed for effective agreements and using voluntary and unilateral measures as stepping stones. This includes piloting verification approaches, sharing lessons learned from national restraint initiatives, contributing to the development of shared definitions, threat assessments, and technical concepts, and supporting multilateral efforts such as the OEWG on PAROS in all its aspects.
- **Respond to violations of legal and political commitments** by speaking out against them publicly, reinforcing accountability, and promoting adherence to international law.

Space must remain a domain that benefits all of humanity, not a new arena for armed conflict. As Ambassador Maritza Chan reminded us last year, “peace is possible, though it often requires a thousand attempts.” We cannot afford to stop trying.

Signatories: This statement was drafted in collaboration with civil society experts on space security. Their contributions are gratefully acknowledged. It is signed by the following organizations:

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Basel Peace Office

Canadian Pugwash Group

Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos - México

Civic Space Foundation

Derechos de la Infancia y la Adolescencia - México

Geneva Centre for Security Policy

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament

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Secure World Foundation

Union of Concerned Scientists

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy

World Future Council