



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - Geneva

## **Open-ended working group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours**

### **Third session**

#### **Statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Leonardo Bencini, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

*Geneva, 31 January*

Mr. Chair,

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

We appreciate your efforts in preparing the Chair's summary and Elements paper. We look forward to further substantive discussions this week and believe that these discussions are already providing a valuable contribution to our common goal of preventing an arms race in outer space.

Mr. Chair,

We believe that there is an urgent need for greater international cooperation to improve space security and prevent an arms race in outer space in an increasingly congested, contested and competitive space environment.

We place a high emphasis on addressing potential escalation dynamics and security threats to safeguard the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis.

The existing international framework applicable to outer space needs to be strengthened to address the complexity of space risks and threats. This means first of all recognizing and protecting the integrity

of the existing legal framework. At the same time, we are convinced that voluntary, non-legally binding rules and measures can actually help us increase stability and predictability and prevent outer space from becoming an arena of conflict.

Norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, including transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, can complement the existent legal framework governing space activities. In addition, they can serve as non-binding tools for the gradual evolution of international law and can be an important intermediate step in maximising the chances of a successful outcome of future negotiations for a binding treaty.

We therefore believe that norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours should build upon, on the one hand, on the applicability of international law in outer space, including the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and the four core Treaties on outer space. In this regard, the Outer Space Treaty is the cornerstone and its universalization and effective implementation should remain a priority.

On the other hand, we believe that some of these norms of responsible behaviours are already contained in other voluntary international measures and guidelines, such as the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence Building Measures in Outer Space Activities and UN COPUOS 21 Guidelines for the Long Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Activities, and they should be further elaborated.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to conclude by briefly addressing the main features that we feel can help and guide the work of this Group in identifying norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.

First, the very notion of responsible behaviour constitutes such a principle. It specifies that any human activity in outer space must be conducted in a way that minimises the risk of degrading the space environment – avoiding, among other things, the unnecessary creation of long-lasting debris – and contributes to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Second, these norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour should fulfil a wide range of functions, such as improving the clarity of intentions of space actors, reducing the risk of misperception and misjudgement and helping to prevent confrontation. They should also help to share information among space actors to build mutual trust.

Third, given the dual use character of many space objects, these rules should be all-encompassing in scope, covering all dimensions of space activities, applying to both military and civil operations and based on the principle of non-harmful interference against space objects.

I thank you Mr. Chair.