



Statement of Kingdom of the Netherlands

delivered by

**H.E. Robert in den Bosch
Permanent Representative
to the Conference on Disarmament
and
Ambassador at large**

at the

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

Geneva, 30 January 2023

In addition to the statement delivered by the European Union, the Netherlands would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Chair,

Under your guidance this OEWG has proven itself as an indispensable platform for an inclusive dialogue with relevant stakeholders on the reduction of space threats, as to ensure a safe, secure, and sustainable Outer Space for us all. This is already a concrete result of this group, even before our final report has been published.

Looking ahead to this week's session, our national position is centred around three principles. First, space security is not only about weapons: it relates to shared values as well. Reaffirming and strengthening existing principles, rules, and institutions create a solid foundation for any further progress in our discussions. We can build upon the shared values that are rooted in the Outer Space Treaty, from the conviction that space security is paramount to guarantee economic and scientific benefits for people around the world, and to preserve

space as humanity's common heritage for future generations. Furthermore, space security can build on shared values regarding safety and sustainability and vice versa. There is no contradiction here, but rather a useful overlap, as we have also seen in the recently held joint 1st/4th Committee joint panel discussion on Outer Space.

It is therefore necessary to improve synergy and common understanding among fora and institutions such as the Conference on Disarmament, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS); the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA); the International Telecommunication Union (ITU); the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC).

Second, we have already made good progress over the last decade in identifying possible ways forward. Now the time has come to act. Creating a Global Points of Contact Directory, drafting a space lexicon and establishing a global space security portal are practical steps that do not require a legally

binding instrument up front. We recall the 2019 summary by the Brazilian Chair of the GGE on further practical measures for PAROS that emphasized inter alia the importance of information exchanges, declarations, notification of certain activities performed by space objects, and enhanced registration of space objects. Let me also refer to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation as a proven instrument for transparency and confidence building. Furthermore, we should bear in mind the discussions on the concept of developing a multilateral mechanism for sharing space situational awareness data, and welcome the contributions of industry, academia, and civil society in this regard. The Netherlands aims to take this concept further and encourage others to join us in discussing ways forward to establish such a mechanism.

Third, we remain convinced that responsible behaviour is a key driver for space security. Looking at the road ahead, we see voluntary norms as the 'what', shared values as the 'why', and legally binding measures on the longer term as the 'whereto'. The GGE, as established by the UN General Assembly

Resolution on Further Practical Measures for PAROS, may serve as a step towards this goal, but we should remain vigilant that responsible behaviour by space actors remains the guiding principle for sustainability, safety and security. Doing too little to prevent a vicious cycle of irresponsible acts may deepen insecurity. We need to go the other way around, by committing ourselves to a virtuous cycle of responsible behaviour that provides a solid basis for further agreements. Further education, discussion, and refinement of the legal framework for space activities has the potential to reduce in part uncertainty and risks of miscalculation. To this end, the Netherlands offers to contribute its expertise on space law and encourages other states to do the same, for example within the Woomera Manual process. National commitments related to the broadly accepted UNGA Resolution not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests is another step in this direction, a commitment the Netherlands is now ready to join. This effort may also serve as a stepping stone for similar efforts regarding other space threats.

Let me conclude by stating that the Netherlands is committed to preserve the momentum and engagement that we have built together, through the remainder of the OEWG and beyond.

Thank you.