

**Opening of the third session of the Open Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours on 28 August 2023**

**Statement by the Federal Republic of Germany**

Mr Chair, colleagues,

Germany marks in this year the 50th anniversary of its accession to the United Nations on 18 September 1973. For five decades, membership in the UN and global engagement in a multilateral framework have been one of the essential backbones of Germany's foreign policy.

To mark this historical date, the Federal Foreign Office organised a public event in Berlin with German astronaut Matthias Maurer from the European Space Agency. He spent in 2021 and 2022 175 days on board of the International Space Station (ISS) and shared his impressions with the audience.

He described how the crew of the international ISS lives like a big family in a small shared-flat, as well as highlights like his own walk in space that lasted seven hours. But he also mentioned rare moments of absolute silence on-board, for instance when ISS entered a cloud of space debris generated by a destructive ASAT-test shortly before or when the station flew over a blacked-out Ukraine in early spring 2022.

He concluded his talk: "From above, our blue planet Earth looks like a little spacecraft too, a spacecraft crewed by the whole humanity, which has shared responsibility for it and must take care of it".

I think these words perfectly underpin the work at this OEWG: our work makes a difference, in practical as well as philosophical terms.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union and the Joint Statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends in support of the OEWG by the representative of the Philippines.

We are particularly pleased by the broad support for the Joint Statement by 33 States, which shows that a cross-regional view on the usefulness of internationally-recognised norms of responsible behaviours is emerging and converging. As our daily life is increasingly dependent on space-based services, we believe that such norms are equally beneficial to space-faring, emerging space-faring and not yet-spacefaring nations.

From the outset, Germany supported the work of this group and would like to thank the Chair – dear Hellmut – and his able and dedicated team from ODA for steering us through three substantial sessions and presenting a substantive and balanced first draft of the final report

We have been pleased with the richness of the debate and with State's substantive engagement on responsible behaviours dealing with these issues. Together, we have been working towards a better understanding and awareness regarding the existing legal framework, security threats and elements for norms of responsible behaviours in outer space. We deeply appreciate the inclusiveness and constructiveness of this working group.

Germany believes that the final report should in the first place reflect the value-added and usefulness of norms of responsible behaviours. They can mitigate space threats leading to escalation and conflict and significantly contribute to preventing an arms race in outer space. Norms of responsible behaviours are complementary with the mandates of the Conference on Disarmament,

resolution of the General Assembly, UN Disarmament Commission and Committee of Peaceful Uses in Outer Space (COPUOS). As politically-binding commitments they can pave the way towards a legally-binding instrument.

The report rightly takes a comprehensive approach to security threats and should consider the different vectors they might possess. Germany together with many other countries, including all EU member states, committed itself not to conduct direct-ascent destructive anti-satellite Norms of responsible behaviours are best suited to address the dual-use character many space objects inherently have, as well as the specific nature of rendez-vous and proximity operations. Such norms can better capture the complex interrelationship of capabilities, intention and actual use, which in combination may lead to real and perceived threats by States.

Germany has recently adopted its first-ever National Security Strategy. Preserving and developing the global arms-control architecture is one of its goals. The strategy further states that outer space is not a rules-free area and a dedicated space security strategy will set down the future strands of action. We believe that strategies and policies made public can play a very positive role as means of transparency and should be accordingly reflected by the final report.

We welcome that the draft final report reaffirms the applicability of international law in outer space, including all relevant international treaties, customary international law and international humanitarian law. We should be further working towards a consolidated common terminology, which facilitates and shapes the discussion on space security between states, and establish criteria for better distinguishing norms of responsible behaviours from TCBMs, as they are not the same.

Mr. Chair,

Regrettably we have to condemn DPRK's unlawful act by launching a so-called "military reconnaissance satellite" using ballistic missile technology on August 24. These space-related activities constitute a flagrant violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions.

Mr Chair,

It is important to acknowledge that we are still in the middle of the process. The work the OEWG has done so far is an excellent starting point. We wish that the report will show areas of convergence and provide further guidance on future working strands of responsible behaviours. We are in favour of setting up a follow-up OEWG, which allows us to deepen our discussions in an inclusive – both in format and substance – manner.

In the week ahead, Germany stands ready to work with all delegations in the spirit of constructiveness, compromise and flexibility towards a substantial report on which consensus can be found in this group.

Thank you.