UK Mission
Geneva

OPEN ENDED WORKING GROUP ON REDUCING SPACE THREATS THROUGH NORMS, RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOURS

AGENDA ITEM 6c: Topic 9: Norms, rules and principles relating to international cooperation, including with respect to space surveillance and tracking and space situational awareness

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM

Clive Hughes, Head of Space Security and Advanced Threats, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

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Mr Chair,

As we develop new norms, rules and principles to address threats to space systems, it is important that we consider how their implementation can be monitored, compliance verified and non-compliance identified and attributed. If states are to abide by new norms, they will want to be assured that others are doing the same.

It is therefore essential that the international community devise ways of gathering and sharing reliable and credible space situational awareness data, which States can trust.

The distance of many satellites from Earth and the dual-use nature of many space technologies presents a significant challenge for accurately understanding and characterising space objects and activities.

Only a few States possess capabilities such as telescopes, radars, on-orbit inspector satellites and analytical tools that allow for a high degree of space situational awareness. Even with these capabilities, there are limits to the ability to determine the nature of objects when in orbit or their intended purpose.

This is why the focus on behaviours is so important. Behaviours can be observed. It is easier to observe how a system is being operated than it is to determine the nature or intended purpose of the system. Shared Space Situational Awareness can give states more confidence in identifying and attributing the activities, actions and omissions of other states, and to provide a more objective basis for addressing any concerns that arise from these behaviours.

As States continue to acquire and/or access space situational awareness capabilities and data, whether from commercial space situational awareness or sovereign systems, they should endeavour to share this information widely and also participate in efforts designed to improve the reliability of

data created from the various sources, all of which use different algorithms and analytical software to arrive at their analyses.

The UK supports the ongoing discussions on space data and information sharing, including those occurring at the International Standards Organization, and which may lead to the establishment of standards that would support effective verification and compliance analyses in future.