



**Statement by Mr. Muhammad Omar, First Secretary, at the  
First Committee's Thematic Debate on Outer Space  
(disarmament aspects) (26 October 2022)**

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**Mr. Chairman,**

Over the past six decades, outer space has witnessed transformational developments in several aspects, ranging from peaceful exploration to growing deployment of assets and increasing reliance on them for a variety of uses.

Concurrently, the international community has developed universal principles and norms to control, regulate and in some cases prohibit activities incompatible with the peaceful uses of outer space and to ensure that outer space remains a “global common” for all people and states.

Once the exclusive preserve of a few states, there are now increasing number of states, other actors and objects in outer space, along with ever greater integration with, reliance on and diverse uses at the terrestrial level.

At the same time, the nature and extent of security threats in, from and to outer space as well as earth has grown manifold. The most visible manifestation of these threats is the unstoppable arms race in and placement of weapons in outer space, with attendant risks to peaceful uses.

Even more worryingly, such threats are magnified by growing integration of weapons, technologies, platforms and dedicated force structures in the nuclear, cyber, conventional and outer space domains.

The development and deployment of missile defence systems and their amalgamation with outer space systems represents yet another layer of threats to strategic stability at the global and regional levels.

In the absence of legal constraints, these systems allow pre-emptive and disarming strikes against terrestrial systems, entailing dangerous consequences for safety, security and sustainability at earth and in outer space.

The line between peaceful and military uses of outer space is being blurred further, as non-governmental actors themselves are no longer singularly confined to its peaceful exploitation. The growing fusion between civilian, intelligence and military institutions and endeavours is no longer a well-kept secret.

Some states openly speak about extending deterrence to outer space. Destabilizing capabilities such as Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT) and directed energy weapons are being complemented by placement of weapons in outer space with serious implications for outer space as well as on earth.

These developments undermine the spirit and principles of existing international law governing outer space. Left unaddressed, these growing risks will mutate into serious threats to global as well as regional peace, security and stability.

**Mr. Chairman,**

This state of affairs underscores the imperative of reinforcing the existing normative and legal architecture governing the security dimension of outer space and enabling it to respond to the growing risks.

Foreseeing these dangers and recognizing the lack of legal rules to offset them effectively, the international community has for decades called for “further measures” and “appropriate international negotiations” to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The Tenth Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) and numerous subsequent resolutions of this universal body reaffirm realization of this long-standing imperative.

Despite being on its agenda for almost four decades, unfortunately, the Conference on Disarmament has been prevented by some to start PAROS negotiations.

Despite increased evidence of weaponization and growing arms race, some States continue to obstruct commencement of such negotiations to this day, citing concerns which can be addressed during the course of CD’s work.

Pakistan reiterates its call for immediate commencement of negotiations in the CD on PAROS to comprehensively address the gaps in the international legal regime governing the exploration and use of outer space.

**Mr. Chairman,**

While recognizing the value of TCBMs in promoting trust and confidence among states, Pakistan does not see such voluntary measures as a substitute for legally-binding treaty-based obligations.

The primary litmus test for the relevance and value addition of any initiative on outer space is whether and to what extent it maintains international consensus on preventing an arms race in outer space and tackles the well-known destabilizing weapons capabilities as well as threats from placement of weapons in outer space.

The fundamental principle enshrined in OST i.e. “use of outer space for the benefit and in the interests of all countries”, the cardinal principle of ensuring equal security for all states, as well as the agreed global norm on the primary responsibility of states with significant military capability vis-à-vis prevention of an arms race in outer space, must remain central to our efforts.

Negotiating and concluding legal instruments is more urgent than ever to guard outer space from increasing threats. It is important to avoid mistakes of the past and not ignore previous realities of nuclear arms race and growth in these arsenals.

If history is any guide, technological or military monopolies of the few do not last for too long. It is therefore both urgent and prudent to prevent weaponizing the outer space and the ensuing devastating peace, security and socio-economic consequences for states and societies. Further delay will be counterproductive.

**I thank you.**