Remarks by the High Representative to the 59th session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

Mr KIM Won-soo
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations

13 June 2016,
Vienna
Mr. Chairman, David Kendall,

Distinguished Vice-Chairs,

Director Simonetta DiPippo, Director of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

This is the first time that I have been invited as the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs to address the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, COPUOS.

For this, I am very grateful, Mr. Chairman.

The invitation to address COPUOS is, in itself, a concrete example of the growing partnership between ODA and the Office for Outer Space Affairs, OOSA, which is ably led by Director Simonetta DiPippo.

I hope this interaction will be the first of many to follow.

Outer space contributes tremendously to enhancing livelihoods and protecting peace.

Ensuring the continued fulfilment of these goals requires multi-dimensional engagement by States.

Against this backdrop, I would like to highlight three points regarding outer space security.

First, on the normative gap.

Growing dependence on space-based assets is creating new vulnerabilities and increasing the risk that any conflict in space can have catastrophic consequences.

These vulnerabilities are made worse by concerns over the weaponization of outer space, the development and deployment of anti-satellite capabilities and increasing threats to terrestrial-based infrastructure.

The gap between these trends and the normative framework governing responsible behaviour is growing.

Normative uncertainty also lingers around the application in outer space of fundamental principles like self-defence and the protection of civilians.

In the face of these challenges, both legally and non-legally binding measures can be pursued in parallel in all available forums.

It is important to recall that the 2013 group of governmental experts on transparency and confidence-building measures, or TCBMs, concluded that voluntary political commitments can form the basis for consideration of legally-binding obligations.
In this context, it was also critically important that the General Assembly decided to refer the 2013 report of the group of governmental experts to all three bodies that deal with outer space and disarmament, peace and security: the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and this body, COPUOS.

Among these, particularly in view of its universal membership and deliberative mandate, the Disarmament Commission has tremendous potential for inclusive discussions on outer space security.

In this regard, I very much welcome the proposal on an outer space agenda item in the Disarmament Commission by the three major space-faring States—China, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

The proposal aims to produce recommendations to promote the practical implementation of TCBMs, with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space.

I would like to express my gratitude for the efforts being made by the Chair to engage key Member States in order to facilitate agreement on an item devoted to outer space.

I hope States find a way to carry forward this important issue without affecting the deliberations on the existing agenda items in the Commission.

Second, on the implementation gap with regards to TCBMs.

I should begin by noting that several positive steps have been taken to this end.

The General Assembly itself has worked to build momentum in the implementation of TCBMs, including through adoption of consensus resolutions [68/50, 69/38, 70/53].

Moreover, in October last year, the First and Fourth Committees held their first ever joint ad hoc meeting.

Building on this meeting, the COPUOS Legal Subcommittee has endorsed the convening of a second joint meeting of the First and Fourth Committees on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty in 2017.

Despite these efforts, however, more must be done to accelerate the pace at which TCBMs are being implemented.

There are several TCBMs that can be implemented immediately, particularly those related to information sharing.

For example, since 2015, ODA has requested all Member States to provide information on their national space policies and on major military outer space expenditure for inclusion in the annual United Nations Report on Military Expenditures.

Unfortunately, however, no Member State provided such information in their submission for the 2015 Report. We must find a way to better utilize this instrument.
For our part, we will encourage the forthcoming group of governmental experts on military expenditures to develop recommendations aimed at facilitating reporting on outer space activities.

Member States could also consider requesting ODA and OOSA to establish a repository for such information received from Member States.

**Third, on the working relationship at the UN Secretariat.**

We, at the Secretariat, must step up our coordination to better support the efforts of Member States.

To that end, ODA and OOSA have significantly increased and strengthened our cooperation in light of our complementary mandates addressing the security and peaceful aspects of outer space, respectively.

I want to express my appreciation to Director DiPippo for stepping up our partnership.

We believe our deepened cooperation will yield positive results for Member States in their pursuit of effective TCBM implementation.

ODA recently joined as a full member of UN-SPACE, which is led by OOSA and comprised of all UN entities involved in outer space.

In September, ODA will co-sponsor with OOSA the 2016 Space Law Workshop. It will address both space law and policy in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. It will provide a useful forum for discussion on space governance and security, including implementation of TCBMs.

Through these various efforts, we did our best to make the special report by UN-SPACE more substantive and useful for Member States.

We will continue these efforts in view of preparation of the report by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly in 2017.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am heartened by the growing momentum to address outer space security.

Nevertheless, more must be done and now is the time to take action.

I fully expect Member States to rise to the challenge to make outer space safer and more secure for all humanity.

Rest assured that ODA and OOSA will be there to provide support.

We look forward to celebrating the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty in 2017 on a stronger foundation, both normative and operational.

I wish you every success in your work.