Mr. Chairman,

I speak on behalf of the member countries of the Union of South American Nations, UNASUR.

UNASUR members share a common interest in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, for the benefit and interest of all States and as the province of all humankind. The world we live in strongly depends on space-based resources, providing services that are indispensable in a number of areas.

We are, therefore, committed to the enhancement of the multilateral legal framework concerning the preservation of a peaceful, safe and secure environment in outer space. As such, the prevention of an arms race in outer space is a matter of urgency.

UNASUR members believe that it is in the best interest of the international community to start negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prevent the placement of any kind of weapon in outer space. There is a widespread recognition of the impending danger resulting from an insufficient legal basis to deal with the problem of weapons in space.

Let me recall that the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) has been on our agenda for a long time. More than 30 years ago, the Conference on Disarmament was called upon by the SSOD-I to consider the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space. Despite concrete exchanges between 1985 and 1994, a lack of consensus has precluded, since then, the adequate consideration of this fundamental issue by the Conference.
Mr. Chairman,

UNASUR members recognize that transparency and confidence building measures can foster mutual understanding, political dialogue and cooperation among States.

In this regard, we welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, established by General Assembly Resolution 65/68. We appreciate that the GGE recognized that TCBMs can form the basis for consideration of concepts and proposals for legally binding obligations.

Furthermore, UNASUR members have been following with great interest discussions on a possible International Code of Conduct on Outer Space Activities, sponsored by the European Union. While we recognize the efforts conducted by the EU, we believe that this initiative would benefit from an effective multilateral approach and mandate.

In the same vein, we welcome the draft resolution, tabled for the first time during this session of the First Committee, on "No first placement of weapons in outer space", which we understand would constitute another important confidence-building measure related to outer space.

UNASUR members reiterate, however, that while political commitments and voluntary arrangements are welcome, they cannot be a substitute for legally binding measures imposing firm and long-term obligations on all States.

Expressing our continuing concern with the possibility of an arms race taking place in outer space, we reiterate our call on all Member States of the Conference on Disarmament to provide the conditions for the early adoption of a Program of Work, which should include the establishment of a Working Group on PAROS, hence paving the way for the negotiation of a legally-binding instrument preventing the placement of weapons in outer space.

I thank you.