

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera,
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Thematic Discussion on Outer space (disarmament aspects)

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Sri Lanka has long held the view that the outer space is a part of the common heritage of humanity and all humankind should have an equal opportunity to explore and utilize it for peaceful purposes, and for the common benefit of humanity through cooperation.

The human race has long suffered due to the arms race in land, sea and air. Outer space must not be another arena for an arms race. All countries, those that have, and those that do not have technological capacity to launch orbital objects, will be affected by the grave consequences that would arise in the case of an arms race in outer space. In addition, the deployment of weapons in outer space could seriously threaten the security of outer space assets and has the potential to harm the Earth's biosphere and give rise to the phenomenon of space debris.

Sri Lanka considers that while space exploration and utilization of outer space and its environment offer ample opportunities to humankind, they also bestow on the space actors the responsibility to preserve the space environment free from conflict and to prevent it from becoming an arena for the arms race.

Sri Lanka recognizes that the existing legal framework on Outer Space needs to be strengthened since the political climate concerning the outer space sustainability and security has changed drastically. We find that the space environment has become increasingly congested due to increased space activities. Further, militarization and the potential weaponisation of the Space environment have underlined the danger of Outer Space becoming a contested area and a source for future conflict.

Sri Lanka, as a responsible member of the global community, has always supported all initiatives that are aimed at preserving peace, preventing conflict and ensuring sustainability in the Outer Space environment. We believe that conclusion of an International Agreement on the Prevention of the Arms Race in Outer Space would contribute in averting its catastrophic effect on humanity. With this objective, Sri Lanka together with Egypt have together presented the draft resolution on an '*Prevention of an arms race in outer space*' which calls for negotiations of legally-binding international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space at the Conference on Disarmament (CD). Sri Lanka is of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should commence, without delay, substantive work on the prevention of arms race in outer space.

Sri Lanka also believes that the use of outer space increases the need for greater transparency, confidence building measures and better information on the part of the international community. Sri Lanka extends support to the Group of Government Experts (GGE) whose report, submitted to the 68th UNGA, contained a set of substantive TCBM measures for Outer Space activities that could be considered by States to implement them on a voluntarily basis. Sri Lanka also participated, as a Vice Chair, at the Multilateral Negotiations on an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities, organized by the EU, which was held in New York from 27 -31 July 2015. Sri Lanka finds that the EU initiative has offered an opportunity to exchange ideas on the conceptual and substantive issues related to the use of Outer Space and the safety, security and sustainability issues surrounding the space environment, and the mitigating mechanisms to address such issues.

Sri Lanka is ready to work with all parties to contribute to maintaining lasting peace and security in outer space. It is much easier to prevent an arms race from taking place rather than controlling it or rolling it back once it has begun.
