



# AUSTRALIA



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## UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIRST COMMITTEE

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### Outer Space

### Statement by Darren Hansen, First Secretary, Australian Mission to the United Nations

Thank you Chair.

Australia welcomes the increased attention that has been paid to the subject of space security in the past few years, including yesterday's useful joint sitting of the First and Fourth Committees.

Modern society has become reliant on space for position, navigation, timing, communications, earth observation and other space-enabled services.

As our collective reliance on space-based technology grows, so does the importance that we preserve the long-term sustainability and security of the space environment as a common good.

The key challenge that we all face now is preventing the proliferation of space debris.

Space debris is not a hypothetical problem.

The odds that the space domain will be rendered unusable for human endeavour will increase over time if nothing is done to reduce space debris now. Science and industry experts argue that we may soon arrive at a 'tipping point'. Beyond that tipping point reducing space debris will become prohibitively costly and difficult.

Australia is actively contributing to international efforts to establish transparency and confidence building measures in outer space as way to address the threat of space debris.

We encourage states to implement the 2013 consensus report of the Group of Government Experts (GGE) on Transparency and Confidence Building Measures in Outer Space Activities.

We also strongly supported the development of a Code of Conduct, to secure consensus on the norms that will facilitate outer space activities.

While there appears no agreement yet on how to settle and implement a code, we remain committed to the codifying effort. The level of support for the code raised at yesterday's joint session is a positive signal for continuing this important work.

These concrete steps would ensure all countries have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of space and minimise the threats, notably of space debris.

Mr Chair

These are pressing issues for our own dynamic Indo-Pacific region.

We applaud the ASEAN Regional Forum's continued efforts to raise awareness and grow capacity to respond to the space debris challenge.

We look forward to participating in the 3<sup>rd</sup> ARF Space Security Workshop to be co-chaired by Laos, China and Russia in Shanghai in December. Australia was proud to initiate and co-chair with Vietnam the inaugural space security workshop in 2012.

Mr Chair

In this context, I would like to raise Australia's ongoing concern about the development and testing of anti-satellite missiles (ASAT).

ASAT weapons have the potential to create vast amounts of space debris that endanger all space assets and space-enabled services upon which all countries rely.

Even if such missiles do not engage a target, their testing and deployment runs counter to the international community's efforts to build transparency and confidence around space activities.

Any initiatives which seek to deal with the issue of non-weaponisation of space, or discourage the threat of force against space objects, should include in their scope ground-based anti-satellite weapons.

We see ASAT weapons as constituting the most pressing threat to space infrastructure – and regard addressing that concern as a key requirement for any space security initiative.

In conclusion, Australia urges the international community to focus on practical and achievable steps we can take together to address the real threats to our space activities, particularly orbital debris.

Thank you Chair