STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ANUPAM RAY – OPEN ENDED WORKING GROUP ON SPACE THREATS – GENEVA – FEBRUARY 3, 2023

Let me begin by thanking you for your stewardship of this meeting of the OEWG. Our thanks, too, to the Secretariat and to those who have contributed to the proceedings.

India's views on this OEWG process are recorded in the Explanation of Vote to UNGA Resolutions 76/231.

Nevertheless, India has participated constructively and substantively in the proceedings of this group.

We have found the discussions useful. We will continue to participate in the same constructive spirit in the future work of this group.

My delegation notes that UNGA 76/231 states that the working group shall work on the basis of consensus and also notes that a diversity of views have been articulated during the proceedings. In this context, India looks forward to finalizing, with due consideration, the work of this group.

We would like to reiterate a few of the issues that we consider important.

First: India believes that priority should be accorded to developing uniform interpretations and understandings of the provisions of the existing legal treaties relating to Outer Space. Common understanding of terms such as 'due regard', 'harmful interference', 'peaceful purposes', among others, require to be developed in appropriate platforms, including this. Increased clarity on existing international law will contribute to reducing misperceptions or misinterpretations in Outer Space.

Second: We would like to reiterate our preference for a legally binding instrument on Outer Space, in particular for a process, which is relating to arms control. In our understanding, legally binding arrangement elicits a stronger guarantee of compliance and greater commitment by states to adhere to the obligations.

Third: India is also open to the development of universal and non-discriminatory non-binding norms and transparency building measures as they can be complementary to a legally binding instrument. We, however, believe that they are not a substitute to legal arrangements, since non-binding norms need wide acceptance to be effective; their compliance may be less rigorous; and, because monitoring compliance to these norms continues to remain a major challenge.

Fourth: We acknowledge that there may be some merit in the pursuit of a behavioral approach to Outer Space security. However, India has concerns about subjectivity in the assessment and interpretation of space behaviors and perception of threats; about who makes these assessments; about how these assessments are made; and about the application of such determinations.

Fifth: We also have concerns about the verification of space behavior using current technology and the access to relevant information and data.

Sixth: India believes that threats to safety, security and sustainability of outer space must be considered comprehensively. A selective focus on certain space threats may impact the process of developing common understandings.

Seventh: Our discussions under this body must take into account the substantial body of work and discussions that have taken place on enhancing Outer Space safety, security and sustainability. India believes that mandates of various fora must be respected; overlaps and the creation of multiple standards on the same set of issues should be avoided.

Eighth: In this context, my delegation is of the view that the full implementation of the existing norms should be given priority over the creation of a new set of norms.

Ninth: As a developing country, we believe that the outcomes of any space security related process, including in this OEWG, should not impede the process of scientific & technological development for peaceful and legitimate purposes and not create new obstacles or restrictions for emerging space faring nations or developing nations.

Mr. Chairman,
India will support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space created by the General Assembly in its 77th session.

Mr. Chairman,
India believes that Outer Space should remain as an ever-expanding frontier of cooperative endeavor rather than conflict. We will support international instruments aimed at maintaining Outer Space for peaceful purposes for all, subject to them being non-discriminatory in nature, adhering to equity, being adequately verifiable and providing greater certainty and predictability in the Outer Space environment.

Thank you.