

**Statement by Ambassador Anupam Ray at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats, Geneva, 30 January 2023**

Thank you, Mr. Chair

We would like to begin by appreciating your work in guiding the proceedings of this body. My delegation assures you of its fullest cooperation.

2. We note with appreciation the papers that we have received from a number of delegations. We are in the process of examining them carefully.

3. India's views on the OEWG are recorded in the Explanation of Vote to UNGA resolution 76/231. India, is however, participating in the proceedings of the group substantively and constructively. We are encouraged that the OEWG adheres to the principle of consensus.

4. India reaffirms the applicability of international law and the UN Charter to the activities in the exploration and use of outer space.

5. India is opposed to the weaponization of outer space and has not resorted to any arms race in outer space.

6. We emphasize the importance of the Outer Space Treaty as the cornerstone of space governance. India is also a signatory to other principal UN treaties on outer space including the Rescue Agreement, the Liability Convention and the Registration Convention.

7. India voluntarily adheres to the 21 guidelines for Long-Term Sustainability of outer space activities, which were multilaterally agreed in UNCOPUOS in 2019. In addition, India implements the debris mitigation guidelines recommended by Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee.

8. India voluntarily implements the transparency and confidence building measures in outer space in accordance with the report of the Group of Governmental Experts in 2013.

9. 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 the appropriate forum.

10. India reiterates its preference for legally binding instruments on Outer Space. In our understanding they elicit a stronger guarantee of compliance and greater commitment by states to adhere to the obligations.

11. India is also open to the development of universal and non-discriminatory non-binding norms and transparency building measures as they can be complementary.

12. 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 monitoring compliance to these norms continues to remain a major challenge.

13. We acknowledge that there may be some merit in the pursuit of a behavioral approach to outer space security.

14. However, subjectivity in the assessment and interpretation of space behaviors and perception of threats; who makes these assessments; how these assessments are made; and the application of such determinations are matters of concern to my delegation. We also have concerns about the verification of space behavior using current technology and the access to relevant information and data.

15. We feel that the elaboration of common understandings and criteria that are accepted and understood by all uniformly, and the means for an unbiased assessments and determinations, should be further discussed, including in this Working Group.

16. In this context, my delegation would like to draw your attention to the report of the GGE on TCBMs in 2013 - para 34 and 35 - which state the criteria for a TCBM: it must be clear, practical and proven; and it must be able to be effectively confirmed by other parties in its application.

Mr. Chair,

17. We also feel that is necessary for this body to take into account the substantial body of work and discussions that have taken place on enhancing outer space safety, security and sustainability.

19. 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.

20. India believes that mandates must be respected, overlaps and the creation of multiple standards on the same set of issues should be avoided.

Mr. Chair,

21. India is a developing country. 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. They should also not impede existing international cooperation efforts.

Mr. Chair,

21. We believe 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 that are non-discriminatory in nature, adhere equity, are adequately verifiable and provide greater certainty and predictability in the outer space environment.

Thank you.