

**CANADIAN STATEMENT: SPACE ISSUES
FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 71st SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

Mr. Chair,

Outer space activities play an increasing and undeniably critical role in the daily life of so many across the globe. At the same time, the increasing volume and complexity of outer space activities create challenges to the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. It is thus in the interest of all countries to create a safe, sustainable and secure outer space environment.

Canada applauds efforts to implement transparency and confidence building measures in outer space activities, as recommended in the 2013 Report of the Group of Governmental Experts and we call upon all states to promptly implement its recommendations. Effective Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures help solidify international norms in outer space, creating greater mutual understanding and reducing tension. They offer pragmatic and near term steps to increase information shared between states, to reduce miscalculations and build overall confidence amongst all states in the peaceful use of outer space. By building increased trust and openness in the space environment, we create the climate necessary to develop future legally-binding measures governing outer space.

[PLACEHOLDER: In this regard, Canada is concerned that the resolution on the “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space” does not adequately respond to the objective of strengthening trust and confidence between states. Unilateral declarations pose the risk of building a false sense of confidence, absent clear definitions of a space weapon and given the inherent dual use nature of technology or other assets. We are also concerned that the ambiguity of the idea of "not to be the first to place" could be interpreted as implicitly encouraging States to pre-emptively develop offensive space capabilities, in order to be able to react to the placement by another State of a weapon in space.]

Canada welcomed last year’s joint meeting of the First and Fourth Committees. This meeting was a first step towards addressing outer space issues in a holistic fashion. Similarly, we welcome the recommendation by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to convene a subsequent joint meeting in 2017 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space. This meeting must, however, transition from symbolic to practical work and, we, as the international community, must plan early and seize every opportunity to explore the intersections between the work of the two Committees. We must also foster increased practical coordination and communication between disarmament and civil space communities as one meeting every two years cannot alone serve the purposes of holistic treatment of space by the international community.

Mr Chair,

Canada remains committed to engaging with other States to advance efforts to maintain a safe, predictable and sustainable outer space environment. We recognize the importance of addressing threats caused by space debris, space weather and near-Earth objects (asteroids) which threaten space-based infrastructure that provide daily essential services to humankind. We, therefore welcome the UN COPUOS’s recent adoption of a first set of voluntary guidelines

for the long-term sustainability of outer space, and call on space-faring nations to implement them.

Canada is honoured to Chair this Committee in 2016 and 2017 and we will continue to actively participate in the finalization of the second set of voluntary guidelines and the resulting compendium to be submitted for adoption by the General Assembly in 2018. The compendium will contribute to strengthen norms of behaviours in outer space activities and to ensuring that we can further leverage space the socio-economic benefits of humankind.

Another priority of Canada's 2016-2017 chairmanship is to contribute to a successful UNISPACE+50 process, which will serve to position COPUOS for the next decade. This process will be an important contribution to ensuring that the international community can take into account the rapidly changing and increasing complexity of issues facing the international community as we seek to ensure that all of humankind can benefit from outer space.

In closing, Mr. Chair, as the international community works to ensure that outer space does not become a theatre of conflict, we call on states to refrain from destabilizing activities such as developing or testing anti-satellite weapons systems, and to clearly signal their intentions, and act responsibly, especially with respect to limiting space debris.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.