

UN 1st Committee Discussion of the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Remarks by Canada

October 19, 2004

Mr. Chairman,

Canada remains profoundly opposed to the weaponisation of space. We want space to be considered as a universal good. Canada's Prime Minister Paul Martin expanded upon this concept in his statement to the UN General Assembly last month, when he said "Space is our final frontier. It has always captured our imagination. What a tragedy it would be if space became one big weapons arsenal and the scene of a new arms race. In 1967, the United Nations agreed that weapons of mass destruction must not be based in space. The time has come to extend this ban to all weapons."

We are committed to seeing the Conference on Disarmament re-establish an Ad Hoc Committee to discuss the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space in all its aspects and to seeing the Conference eventually undertake the negotiation of a space weapons ban. With a view to realizing such a ban, the re-establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS would also respond to the call of UNGA Resolution 58/36 and its predecessors. In this regard, Canada supports the draft resolution, L.36, submitted by Egypt and Sri Lanka. We call on all member nations to support this initiative - and not just rhetorically, but in the most practical terms. The Conference must get back to productive work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as other matters.

As has been suggested in the CD, one way to help start up this process pending re-establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS, might be for the Conference to establish an experts group to explore some of the more technical aspects of space security issues.

Canada would also call for the establishment of "crosswalks" between the space-related work of the First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly. Likewise, the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Conference on Disarmament must work together more closely on this issue. Exchange of information is essential to address this increasingly critical area of multilateral interest. In March of this year, Canada co-sponsored a workshop on space security, with UNIDIR, on the margins of the CD in Geneva. A clear message from the workshop was that there is a need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to ensuring space security.

Canada encourages creative thinking and action with regard to confidence building measures that could help ensure space security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We were pleased to hear Russia's recent pledge, made here in the First Committee on October 5, that it would not be the first to deploy any kind of weapon in outer space, and its appeal to all countries with a space-faring potential to follow suit.

Such declarations of no first deployment of space-based weapons represent a good interim measure. If adopted widely, they could help build confidence that no nation will station weapons in space and could lead us closer to our objective of an eventual ban.

Canada's goal is to support the continued access to and use of space by all nations for peaceful purposes. Space and the benefits it provides across a wide range of sectors represent an increasingly valuable resource that must be protected. This international good is simply too precious to leave unprotected by multilateral action.

With the approaching 40th anniversary of the entry into force of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, we might also consider how we can work together to encourage states that have not ratified this "Magna Carta of Space" to do so before 2007.

Mr. Chairman, on a related matter, I think that it is important to acknowledge the fact that the First Committee now has before it, for the first time, a resolution on the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missiles. This resolution is a positive step forward in addressing the clear challenges that missile technology poses to disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. Over time, we hope to see an expansion of multilateral cooperation on this issue.

Thank you.