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FORUM: DISEC

QUESTION OF: “PREVENTION OF AN ARMED RACE IN OUTER SPACE”

INTRODUCTION

Countries have been interested in exploring outer space and as humankind we have achieved great successes to this day. But with the utilization of outer space for arms related benefits, comes risk for life on Earth. The United Nations believe that arming outer space and utilizing it for the advantages of countries in war is unethical and that it should be prevented, and so the DISEC Committee has and will be discussing on the agenda item “Prevention of an arms race in outer space.”

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Treaty: “a binding formal agreement, contract, or other written instrument that establishes obligations between two or more subjects of international law (primarily states and international organizations).”

Depositary: “a government or organization to which a multilateral treaty is entrusted.”

Resolution: “a formal text adopted by a United Nations (UN) body to resolve the agenda item/issue it relates to.”

Arms race: “a competition between nations for superiority in the development and accumulation of weapons.”

Outer space: “the expanse that exists beyond Earth's atmosphere and between celestial bodies.”

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA):

The United Nations-established organization working along with DISEC for the goal of disarmament of UN countries and minimizing the threat caused by weaponries.

United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA):

The United Nations-established organization to manage affairs in outer space, including the ongoing arms race in outer space.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first action taken on the agenda item:



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The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (“Outer Space Treaty”), the first treaty regarding the UN’s concern about outer space threats, was signed on the date: 27th of July, in 1967 and was put to effect in 10th of October, 1967. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) states that 89 out of 115 parties signed the treaty, the main depositories being the Government of the United States of America, the Government of the Russian Federation, and the Government of the United Kingdom. The treaty was signed and adopted at London, Moscow and Washington. Later in 2008, the Governments of China and the Russian Federation introduced the draft text of such a treaty to the DISEC Committee. They presented a revised draft treaty in 2014.

UN resolutions discussed about the agenda item:

Resolution 36/97 C (1981)

Resolution 53/76 (1998)

Resolution 75/36 (2020)

Resolution 78/55 (2023)

Further information can be found in the relevant documents part.

UN-established groups regarding the agenda item:

Group of Governmental Experts (GGE): Established to consider further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the GGE held sessions to discuss and propose recommendations.

Open-ended Working Group (OEWG): Scheduled to convene its organizational session in February 2025, the OEWG aims to address the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

CURRENT SITUATION

Although there were major steps taken in resolving this issue, as seen above, the discussions and innovations about the agenda item are still being discussed by the UN and no certain resolution has been achieved.

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

Countries:

Government of the United States of America:

The government of the United States of America is one of the most vital states for this agenda item as the USA has advanced far into deep-space exploration and is one of the first states to take action against by signing the “*Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*”.

Government of the Russian Federation:



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The government of the Russian Federation is also one of the important states for this issue as the government of the Russian Federation has also advanced far into deep space exploration but has advanced even further into the arms race amongst countries. The government of the Russian Federation also understands the threat of an arms race in outer space and again was one of the first states to take action by signing the “*Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*”.

Government of the United Kingdom:

The government of the United Kingdom was the 3rd state to sign the “*Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*” and also is another country who participates in the arms race.

Government of the People's Republic of China:

The government of the People’s Republic of China is a big force in the world when it comes to arms race and outer space exploration as China is one of the countries who has their own space station instead of having access to the ISS. Although China wasn’t one of the depositaries in the “*Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*”, the government later improvised the already signed treaty and therefore has contributed to preventing an arms race in outer space.

Groups:

United Nations GA (General Assembly)

Conference on Disarmament (DISEC):

The United Nations Convention on disarmament among UN countries.

United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA):

“The Office for Outer Space Affairs is the United Nations office responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. The Office forms part of the United Nations Office at Vienna and serves as the Secretariat for the General Assembly's only committee dealing exclusively with those issues: the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The Committee has two subcommittees: the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee.

The Office for Outer Space Affairs implements the United Nations Programme on Space Applications (PSA) and works to improve the use of space science and technology for the economic and social development of all countries, particularly developing countries. Under the Programme, the Office conducts training courses, workshops, seminars and other



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activities in subject areas such as remote sensing, communications, satellite meteorology, search and rescue, basic space science and satellite navigation.

On behalf of the Secretary-General, the Office for Outer Space Affairs maintains the Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space and disseminates via its website that information recorded in the Register.

The Office also prepares and distributes documents, reports, studies and publications on various aspects of space science and technology applications and international space law. The documents and reports are available in all official languages of the United Nations on the Office's website. The Office for Outer Space Affairs provided secretariat services for the three United Nations conferences on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space and participates in the implementation of the recommendations adopted in the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), held in Vienna in July 1999.”

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA):

“United Nations ODA was established in January 1998 as the Department for Disarmament Affairs which was part of the SG’s programme for reform in accordance with his report to the General Assembly (A/51/950). It was originally established in 1982 upon the recommendation of the General Assembly’s second special session on disarmament (SSOD II). In 1992, its name was changed to Centre for Disarmament Affairs, under the Department of Political Affairs. At the end of 1997, it was renamed Department for Disarmament Affairs and in 2007, it became the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs supports multilateral efforts aimed at achieving the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The mandate for the programme is derived from the priorities established in relevant General Assembly resolutions and decisions in the field of disarmament, including the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2). Weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, continue to be of primary concern owing to their destructive power and the threat that they pose to humanity. The Office also works to address the humanitarian impact of major conventional weapons and emerging weapon technologies, such as autonomous weapons, as these issues have received increased attention from the international community.

UNODA provides substantive and organizational support for norm-setting in the area of disarmament through the work of the General Assembly and its First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and other bodies. It fosters disarmament measures through dialogue, transparency and confidence-building on military matters, and encourages regional disarmament efforts; these include the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and regional forums.



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It also provides objective, impartial and up-to-date information on multilateral disarmament issues and activities to Member States, States parties to multilateral agreements, intergovernmental organizations and institutions, departments and agencies of the United Nations system, research and educational institutions, civil society, especially non-governmental organizations, the media and the general public.

UNODA supports the development and implementation of practical disarmament measures after a conflict, such as disarming and demobilizing former combatants and helping them to reintegrate in civil society.”

Non-governmental and civilian groups:

Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) (UN-Established)

“The Secretary General of the United Nations may appoint a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to undertake a study on issues of concern and report findings at the UN General Assembly.”

Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) (UN based but Civilian-Established):

“The OEWG is an inter-governmental process in which negotiation and decision making are exclusive prerogatives of Member States.”

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Document on “the GGE (Group of Governmental Experts) on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space.”:

[Link](#)

This document gives detailed info on the creation of the GGE and actions that the GGE has taken to prevent the agenda item, along with details on the parties that participated.

Report by the Chair on the work of the GGE, pursuant to A/RES/72/250:

[Link](#)

This document presents a general overview on the work of the GGE, written by the chair.

Document on the history of prevention of an arms race in outer space;

[Link](#)

This document gives a general overview on the actions that have been taken by the UN and its members to prevent the arms race in outer space.

Resolution 36/97 C (1981):

[Link](#)



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This resolution called upon all states to contribute actively to the peaceful use of outer space and to take immediate measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. It also requested the Conference on Disarmament to consider this issue as a matter of priority.

Resolution 53/76 (1998):

[Link](#)

Reaffirming the urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space, this resolution called upon all states, especially those with major space capabilities, to refrain from actions contrary to this objective and to adhere to existing treaties.

Resolution 75/36 (2020):

[Link](#)

This resolution emphasized the need for further practical measures to prevent an arms race in outer space and encouraged transparency and confidence-building measures among states.

Resolution 78/55 (2023):

[Link](#)

Adopted in December 2023, this resolution reiterated the call for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and highlighted the importance of international cooperation in ensuring the peaceful use of outer space.

SOLUTION ALTERNATIVES

- Mutually determining among UN countries whether something should be allowed to go to outer space and determining whether it's done for the greater good of all humanity without seeking a specific country's benefits.

This could be established by merging all of the private space organizations into one led mutually by the UN countries.

- Surveilling arms developments among UN countries and approving or disapproving whether the project is done in good faith and for the benefit of the majority or for defense purposes.

This could be established by improving and increasing the range, knowledge of already existing organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

USEFUL LINKS

The current situation of the arms race in outer space: (UN-Source)

[Link](#)

**A general overview and the full definition of the topic with it's details:
(Non-UN source)**

[Link](#)



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A wikipedia article good for understanding the topic and what the full issue is:

(Non-UN source)

[Link](#)

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