

JejuMUN XI

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Disarmament and International Security Council Committee (DISEC)

1 | Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space

SDG: 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions | 17. Partnerships for the goals

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Committee Introduction	3
Agenda Introduction	4
Letter from the Chairs	5
Key Terms	6
Historical Background	6
Current State of Affairs	8
Stances of Parties	9
Possible Solutions	10
Questions to Consider	11
Bibliography	12

Committee Introduction

The themes that DISEC focuses on are related to the challenges with disarmament, international security and threats to achieve global peace. The primary objective of DISEC within the General Assembly is to establish "General principles of cooperation in terms of the maintenance of international peace and security", which also contains the principles of governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments.

Furthermore, "recommendations about such principles to the members of the Security Council" have been provided by DISEC. The UN charter states that DISEC may recommend particular subjects to the Security Council, even if it is not permitted to directly advise or contribute to the decision-making process of the Security Council. DISEC is an institution under the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), which was formally named in January 1988, aside from the position in the General Assembly.

This came following the second extraordinary disarmament session held by the Secretary General in 1982. The UNODA is concerned about weapons of mass destruction (WMD), nuclear weapons, and conventional weapons, among other entities. In order to strengthen its disarmament objectives, DISEC collaborates with the General Assembly to obtain meaningful support to its initiatives regarding disarmament.

Agenda Introduction

In 2007, the People's Republic of China used an anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon to destroy the malfunctioning weather satellites. Such action not only generated a hazardous amount of wreckage but also demonstrated China's capability to compete in space warfare. Moreover, followed by the Chinese missile launch into space in 2013, U.S. military space officials declared they would work toward enhancing and fortifying space security satellites.

In recent years, the rapid technological advancements and rivalry between China and the US set a spark in the arms race in outer space once again after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Such heightened tension has concentrated the global community's attention to the Prevention of the Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), including the Outer Space Treaty and the Moon Agreement where the use and the development of space weapon technology were prohibited.

Notwithstanding the ratification of those treaties, the inextricable link between the technological advancement and weaponization of outer space has recently fueled the arms race in outer space. Moreover, the technological gap between the 1980s and nowadays has made those treaties ineffective in recent issues, contributing to the vague interpretation of the weaponization of space. Moreover, the preexisting agreements are incapable of conducting concrete actions on the violation of treaties.

As technology advances, the heightened tension in the arms race in outer space will be inevitable. Therefore, a framework that encourages states to cooperate and lays a legal framework in the international arena is necessary. The focus of such a framework should not only be on mediating the tensions of the arms race but also on understanding, and fostering dialogue, and cooperation, cherishing the true virtues of globalisation.

Letter from the Chairs

Dear esteemed delegates,

We are Leo Li and James Park from North London Collegiate School Jeju (NLCS Jeju). We are delighted to host you at DISEC at JejuMUN XI.

Firstly, congratulations on your great participation in the DISEC at JejuMUN XI. We expect the delegates to actively participate throughout the conference, by bringing forward a variety of agendas and motions, competing in debates, and working collaboratively on resolution drafting. We hope that all the delegates can demonstrate their own strengths, especially in their teamwork and communication skills in this conference. In addition, we also hope that by the end of the conference, you will have new friendships made with other delegates.

If you are a rookie MUN delegate, don't worry, the chairs have some tips to share with you. Although it can be challenging to discuss concisely and clearly in front of a group of people you are not familiar with, we advise you to be confident and speak up without holding back during the conference. The chairs don't want you to doubt yourself while voicing your thoughts and opinions, even if your speech or stances differ from the rest of the committee. All the delegates, regardless of experience level, will benefit from this conference, such as in-depth research on the agenda and constructive discussions and active debates with fellow delegates. You will have a deeper understanding of the topic and be able to assess how your and other countries' approach the agenda.

The agenda for DISEC in this conference is "Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space". We hope that, given the recent emergence of this issue, your background knowledge and perspectives will ultimately contribute to an active debate and resolution drafting. We wish this conference goes well for all of you, and if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to stay in touch with us with the email addresses below.

Best regards,

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Key Terms

Arms race

A race between countries to see who can develop and amass the most weapons.

Outer space

The physical cosmos that extends beyond the atmosphere of Earth.

Satellite

An artificial body launched into orbit around the moon, earth, or another planet with the purpose of communication or data collection.

Outer Space Treaty

The Outer Space Treaty, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, is a multilateral treaty that forms the basis of international space law.

Moon Treaty

The Moon Treaty or Moon Agreement is a multilateral treaty that transfers sovereignty of all celestial bodies to the participating nations. It is also known as the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

Globalisation

The process by which companies or other organisations begin to function internationally or gain international power.

Weaponisation

The process by which companies or other organisations begin to function internationally or gain international power.

Ratification

The process of officially approving a treaty, contract, or agreement by signing it, thus establishing its legal validity.

Militarisation

The preparation procedure of the military for an upcoming warfare or conflict.

Space Objects

Any objects that are launched into orbit to go to, through, or into outer space from the Earth, the Moon, or other celestial bodies are referred to as space objects.

Satellite Servicing

The act of making technological upgrades, repairs, refuelling, and/or inspections of satellites currently in orbit is referred to as satellite servicing. The capacity to do a proximity and rendezvous operation (RPO) is necessary for such tasks.

Ground Segment

The portion of a space system that is located on Earth and consists of all the infrastructure and components required to run a spacecraft and provide services to consumers.

Payload

The components or sections of the spacecraft that carry out the intended tasks of the space object are referred to as the payload.

Cislunar Space

The area of space, including the Moon's orbit, that lies between the Earth and the Moon.

Historical Background

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) was founded in 1959 by UN General Assembly Resolution 1472. This group promoted space-related research, examined legal issues resulting from space exploration, and explored areas for international collaboration in the peaceful uses of space. It also developed projects to be carried out by the United Nations.

In the 1960s and 1970s, several agreements were put in place to stop the military use of space. These consist of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963), also known as the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, the Outer Space Treaty (1967), also known as the Treaty on the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, the Rescue Agreement (1968), also known as the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, the Agreement Relating to the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, also known as the Intelsat (1971), the Liability Convention (1972), also known as the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects, the Launch Registration Convention (1975), also known as the Convention on the Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, and the Moon Agreement (1979), also known as the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

Even though these agreements prohibit the positioning of weapons of mass destruction in space, they do not stop countries from deploying different kinds of weapons in space. Many states argue that current treaties are not adequate to protect outer space as "the common heritage of mankind." To tackle this issue, the final document of the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Disarmament required negotiations to occur within the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to avoid an arms race in outer space as outlined in the Outer Space Treaty.

In 1985, the CD formed a special committee to address matters concerning PAROS, including legal safeguards for satellites, nuclear power in space, and confidence-building measures. The United States firmly objected to granting the committee a mandate for negotiations, favouring one-on-one discussions with the Soviet Union. The committee met annually until 1994. The United States objected, preventing any additional committee meetings from taking place. In 1990, the United States declared that it had not found any effective outer space arms control measures that could be addressed in a multilateral setting. Due to its extensive missile defence program and technological superiority in possible space weapons, the United States has persistently declined to discuss PAROS in the CD.

Current State of Affairs

The concerns regarding the intensification of arms race in outer space had emerged since the early 2000s as the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) in 2002.. The withdrawal of the United States opened the door for the development of advanced missile defence systems, some of which could weaponize space technology in ways such as the deployment of anti-satellite weapons in space. Accordingly, fears were raised among other countries that it would instigate the other countries to start developing their own space weapons as well, eventually escalating the arms race in space and pulling down the strategic balance.

In recognition of the mounting risks, the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) was founded in 2005 with the aim of precluding further intensification of the arms race in space. This underscored that the space, once considered a site of peaceful exploration, was now standing at the verge of becoming militarised. The committee was majorly led by the People's Republic of China and Russian Federation in an apprehension of the United States potentially dominating the outer space weapons. Yet, several resolutions passed in the committee lacked effectiveness as they were not only non-binding, but also confronted reluctance of major space powers.

In recent years, the militarization of space has become an undeniable fact. In 2019, the establishment of a new U.S. Space Force further underscored that space was coming to be seen as an increasingly vital domain for national security. This, along with Russia and China aggressively advancing their military space programs signalled that the way many countries believed in space was changing towards it possibly being a future battlefield. Moreover, India's ASAT missile test in 2019 also highlighted the growing danger of war and a new arms race at that altitude due to more frequent testing of anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons.

At the same time, space exploration and cooperation initiatives such as NASA's Artemis Accords, launched in 2020, have sought to lay down frameworks for the peaceful use of space, which were also happening around this time. Although they primarily emphasise lunar exploration, the Accords have sparked questions concerning their impact on space governance and potential conflicts over resources in outer space. To respond to such security challenges in space, the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats was created during 2021. This Initiative assembled Member States to discuss best practices for reducing the risk of conflict in space – such as transparency and confidence building measures, norms of responsible behaviour.

Stances of Parties

Algeria

Algeria advocates for non-weaponization of outer space and calls for legally binding international treaties. Algeria has supported and voted resolutions of the UN to this end, usually in favour of those promoting PPWT proposed by Russia & China) it consistently called for global cooperation concerning space security.

Australia

Australia purports to support space security, though being more in favour of transparency and confidence-building measures rather than new treaties. Australia does not have space weapons but aligns with U.S. policies on space security. It is a signatory to the OST and joined the Artemis Accords in 2021, underscoring peaceful space exploration. Australia supports transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) and participates in military space cooperation with the U.S., particularly through the Five Eyes alliance, but remains cautious about legally binding treaties like the PPWT.

Brazil

Brazil espouses the peaceful uses of outer space and the ratification of legally binding agreements to alleviate the heightened tensions of outer space arms race. Brazil is a proactive contribution to discussion at the UN and COPIOUS, underscoring that international cooperation must be promoted for an equitable usage of space resources

Canada

Canada has long supported the peaceful uses of outer space and believes in transparency, confidence building measures. Canada has said that it considers PAROS not to be an arms control issue, expressed concerns about the weaponization of space and supported resolutions calling for negotiations on a PAROS while at the same time noting its caution over making binding commitments without widespread consensus.

China

China has taken a leading role in the World against weaponization of space. In 2007, China tested an anti-satellite (ASAT) missile that blew up a satellite in orbit generating large amounts of space debris. The OST is also a historical and important agreement for China, which is one of the co-authors together with about 20 other countries in drafting a Treaty on Prevention of Placement Weapons to be stationed or used within Outer Space (PPWT) back in 2008. China has been against military uses and militarization up space since long time ago while advocating for a new substantive legal instrument that prevents an arms race in space.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

DPRK's space activities in particular satellite launches have given rise to concerns about non-military applications that could be turned into weapons thus promoting militarization of outer space. North Korea has been quiet on efforts by the world community to prevent an arms race in space and does not participate significantly in treaties such as the Outer Space Treaty (OST). Instead, it has focused on developing its missile and satellite programmes, while opposing US dominance in space while evading any of its direct roles in global policy-making efforts for outer space.

France

France shares dual strategy by promoting peaceful use of space while acknowledging the need for defence-related military capabilities in this regard. France set up Space Command in 2019 to develop its military capacities for outer space operations. As a party to the Outer Space Treaty (OST), France also endorses the Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities adopted by the EU but remains doubtful about legally binding arrangements like PPWT without substantial verification measures, reconciling its peace-oriented commitments with national security imperatives.

Egypt

Egypt advocates for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and has always supported international efforts, including the PPWT. It participates in global efforts to disarmament and has suggested universal discussions that take into account the needs of developing countries in space governance.

India

India supports peaceful usage of space while it owns its ASAT capabilities too, demonstrated in the 2019 "Mission Shakti" test. The country is a signatory to OST and also supports PAROS although it stresses that there is need for inclusive deliberations in relation to space security threats from both ground and space sources. While urging international collaboration on space activities, India still has its own defence capabilities.

Germany

Germany espouses the use of space for peaceful purposes and possesses no weapons in this regard. It is a signatory to OST while at the same time backing the EU's Code of Conduct which concentrates on transparency and confidence-building measures that can prevent conflicts in the space domain. Due to its commitment towards responsible practices in outer space, Germany has consistently proposed responsible behaviour in space and multilateral treaties against weaponization of space. Yet, it shares France's apprehensions about enforceability of legally binding agreements like PPWT.

Hungary

Hungary does not have any orbital weapons; instead it only supports peaceful utilisation of space. It is a signatory to the OST and complies with broader EU policy in terms of safety in outer space such as promoting transparency tools. Hungary has adopted the EU's Code of Conduct because it believes that countries must act responsibly when using outer-space resources. However, unlike in the case involving PPWT, it was not prominent on all sides during these debates about new international legal instruments related to disarmament in outer-space.

Iran

Iran advocates for the demilitarisation of outer space and has supported the PPWT postulated by Russia and China. However, its space program, including satellite launches, has raised concerns over dual-use technology. Iran is a signatory to the OST and also supports PPWT that advocates against militarization of space and aims to promote peaceful utilisation of space. However, its activities have initiated international scrutiny particularly from the United States and its allies.

Israel

Israel possesses advanced space capabilities such as spy satellites but is secretive about potential weaponisation. Israel has been reluctant to sign legally binding agreements which may limit its security choices despite being a party to the OST. Therefore it prefers voluntary measures that could be transparent instead of treaties that could limit their security.

Italy

Italy does not have any weapons in space and supports usage of outer limits for peaceful purposes only. Being a signatory to the OST, Italy's policy aligns with broader EU policies, including EU's Code of Conduct which encourages transparency along with responsible behaviour in space. Therefore, Italy would rather see binding treaties gain wide acceptance before signing as well as supporting international cooperation in the security aspects related to space sciences .

Japan

Japan has expanded its military space capabilities, including reconnaissance and early warning satellites in response to regional security concerns. Japan is a signatory to the OST and joined the Artemis Accords in 2020. Japan supports the peaceful use of space, aligned closely with U.S. policies on space defence. Yet, Japan is concerned about regional threats and enforceability of treaties like PPWT.

Luxembourg

Though Luxembourg does not have weaponry in space; it has however become an important player in space resource utilisation. It is a signatory to the OST and supports transparency and confidence-building measures, focusing on commercial space activities and responsible behaviour in space. The country has been cautious about new binding treaties that might limit its business interests in outer-space.

Pakistan

Pakistan promotes PAROS being a member of the LOST thereby calling for legally enforceable agreements against militarization of this outer-space region given its current conflicts with India. Pakistan supports the PPWT as well as legally binding agreements aimed at preventing militarization of space amidst ongoing tensions with India while emphasising fair access to technology and peaceful uses for outer-space

Republic of Korea

As a signatory to the OST, the Republic of Korea supports the balance between peaceful use of space and transparency measures and its security needs in conflict zones. South Korea has participated in international debates over the topics of space security and TCBMs, while also being aerospace weapons-capable. Still, the Republic of Korea has been wary of restrictive treaties such as the PPWT arguing that international cooperation on space security challenges should be pursued without limiting defensive capabilities.

Russian Federation

Russia is a crucial proponent of preventing weaponization of space. The country has an arsenal of space weapons, including ASAT capabilities shown in numerous tests such as the 2021 test that generated extensive space debris. As a signatory to the OST, Russia, co-authored the PPWT in its bid to enshrine legal restraints on space militarization. Moreover, Russia has consistently advocated for international arms control agreements to prevent a space arms race, while simultaneously continuing to develop its own military assets in space.

Spain

Spain is also a signatory to the OST and aligns with the EU policies, following the EU's Code of Conduct and emphasises transparency in the development of space. Despite not possessing a space weapon, Spain has been involved in multiples of international discussions regarding the security in the outer-space area.

Switzerland

Switzerland is a strong advocate for transparency and confidence-building measures. It is a signatory to the OST and has played a mediating role in international discussions on space security. Switzerland supports efforts to prevent the weaponization of space and promote peaceful space activities.

Türkiye

Türkiye supports the PAROS without possessing any space weapons. It has ratified the OST and has expressed support for international efforts to prevent an outer space arms race. At recent regional space initiatives, Türkiye has emphasised the importance of cooperation and responsible behaviour in space.

Ukraine

Ukraine also endorsed the Peace uses of outer space and took part in negotiating international agreements related to the security aspects of space activities. While Ukraine does not currently possess any space weapons, it has focused on developing its space industry. Influenced by its geopolitical situation, Ukraine has been underscoring the importance of international cooperation and transparency measures in the space activities in multiple international conferences, including TCBMs.

United Kingdom

Although the United Kingdom does not possess space weapons, it is undergoing the process of military space capabilities, including satellite technology and early warning systems. It has ratified the OST and promotes transparency and responsible space activities. Yet, the United Kingdom remains sceptical on binding treaties, such as PPWT, underscoring the effectiveness of voluntary measures.

United States

The United States holds predominant military space capabilities, including anti-satellite (ASAT) systems, missile defence technologies, and the establishment of the U.S Space Force in 2019. While it is a signatory to the Outer Space Treaty (OST), the U.S. opposes legally binding agreements like the Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space (PPWT), arguing that they lack effective verification mechanisms and fail to address ground-based threats. Instead, the U.S. advocates for transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) and promotes voluntary guidelines to ensure space remains secure while maintaining its strategic advantage. The United States also prioritises space dominance, viewing space as a critical domain for national security and defence.

Possible Solutions

Solution 1: Establishing a Comprehensive International Treaty on Space Arms Control

By imposing legal obligations on countries to forbid the stationing, testing, and use of weapons in space, an all-encompassing international convention on space arms control would seek to stop the militarization of space. Expanding upon current agreements such as the Outer Space convention of 1967, this new convention would specifically forbid anti-satellite weapons (ASATs) and other space-based armaments, guaranteeing that space will always be used for peaceful purposes. Along with provisions for fines against offenders, the pact would incorporate verification methods including satellite monitoring and inspections to assure compliance. The treaty would encourage international collaboration and stop the rise of military tensions in space by uniting major spacefaring nations under the aegis of the UN.

Solution 2: Enhancing Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures (TCBMs)

Encouraging countries to voluntarily reveal information about their space activities, such as satellite launches, space missions, and any dual-use technologies that could be viewed as threatening, is part of Enhancing Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures (TCBMs). This more openness would lessen the possibility of misinterpretations and errors in judgement that could trigger a space arms race. Building confidence and working together on space security challenges, governments might hold frequent talks and workshops under the auspices of the UN. Further calming the situation would be bilateral no-first-deployment promises, in which countries agree not to be the first to launch weapons into space. If these steps were taken through already-existing international channels, they would promote a more cooperative and benign attitude toward space operations.

Questions to Consider

1. How can delegates jointly collaborate on this agenda to achieve the desired outcomes?
2. Would it be helpful for the committee to receive advice and recommendations from other pre-existing committees and UN agencies?
3. How can the committee manage to achieve a desired outcome with the minimum unwanted consequences?
4. Would the drafted resolution have a significant impact in the long term?
5. Would this drafted resolution be sustainable and possibly benefit the international community as a whole?

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