

## ≡ Meetings Coverage and Press Releases

### Meetings Coverage

General Assembly / First Committee

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#### **SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION, 30TH MEETING (AM)**

**GA/DIS/3756  
5 November 2024**

### **In Nearly 50 Separate Recorded Votes, First Committee Approves 15 Drafts on Conventional Weapons, Divergent Approaches to Outer Space Security**

The General Assembly would reaffirm that the prevention of an outer space arms race would avert a grave danger for international peace and security and thus welcome deliberations by the open-ended working group on reducing space threats, which constitute an important contribution to outer space security and the prevention of such an arms race, according to one of 15 drafts approved today by the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security).

The draft resolution, on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours ([A/C.1/79/L.75](#)), was approved by a recorded vote of 166 in favour to 8 against (Belarus, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syria), with 5 abstentions (Bolivia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe).

Also by the text, States would be encouraged to give further consideration to how the implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours could be monitored and verified — including through the provision of capacity-building, cooperation on space situation awareness and the possible establishment of a mechanism for inter-State coordination and consultation on matters pertaining to space activity — and how they would contribute to the negotiation of legally binding instruments, including on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

A draft on an open-ended working group on the prevention of an outer space arms race ([A/C.1/79/L.61/Rev.1](#)) would decide to convene the group for 2024-2028 to replace the two open-ended working groups established by resolutions 78/20 and 78/238. The new group would be tasked with

submitting recommendations on preventing an outer space arms race through discussions informed by all relevant Assembly resolutions. It would work on the basis of consensus and provide an annual update to the Assembly through its First Committee. It was approved by 168 in favour to 2 against (Nicaragua, Russian Federation), with 9 abstentions (Belarus, Bolivia, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Zimbabwe).

Also approved, by 123 in favour to 52 against, with 6 abstentions (Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Switzerland), was a draft on no first placement of weapons in outer space ([A/C.1/79/L.59](#)). By its terms, the Assembly would urge an early commencement of substantive work based on the updated draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and on the threat or use of force against outer space objects, introduced by China and the Russian Federation at the Conference on Disarmament in 2008. It would encourage all States, especially spacefaring nations, to consider the possibility of upholding, as appropriate, a political commitment not to be the first to place weapons in outer space.

A draft resolution on further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space ([A/C.1/79/L.6](#)) was approved by 122 in favour to 50 against, with 8 abstentions (Argentina, Fiji, Georgia, Liberia, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Switzerland). Acting without a vote, the Committee approved another text on the prevention of an arms race in outer space ([A/C.1/79/L.3](#)) and transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities ([A/C.1/79/L.58](#)).

Prior to taking action on the outer space cluster, several delegations delivered general statements, including the United Kingdom's representative, who, introducing "L.67", said it is motivated by the increasingly urgent need to break the long-standing impasse on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The "responsible behaviours approach" focuses on the full range of threats to, from and in space and all the factors that could drive an arms race in that realm. It recognizes that measures to prevent an outer space arms race could be expressed in both legally binding and political instruments and that the two are complementary.

The observable actions of States can achieve the prevention of an arms race in outer space, he said, adding that the draft's approach has been inclusive, providing a platform for spacefaring and aspiring spacefaring nations and those who rely on space services for their security and prosperity. While some delegations continue their efforts to undermine the "behaviours approach and in some cases wipe it from the records", his country will continue to champion the approach within the UN and other forums.

The representative of Egypt, speaking on behalf of a cross-regional core group of countries, presented an oral revision to “L.61/Rev.1”. The core group, he noted, had engaged in several rounds of informal and bilateral consultations aimed at reaching a point of equilibrium addressing the concerns of all delegations. The main purpose behind creating a “single open-ended working group” is to allow for a “coherent, inclusive and effective discussion”, he said, stressing that the group wanted to “avoid duplication and false dichotomies”.

The representative of Brazil said his country had worked together with partners of the cross-regional core group for a unified forum on the prevention of an outer space arms race. It aimed to ease the excessive burden that two separate working groups would impose on States financially and in terms of human resources and make it possible for the membership to engage in the necessary substantive and comprehensive discussion.

China’s delegate said his country consistently advocates for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and of its weaponization. “We believe that the fundamental way to address the issue of outer space security is to negotiate and conclude a legally binding international instrument,” he stressed. China supports the early launch of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to elaborate such an instrument.

The representative of the Russian Federation said that her country submitted three draft resolutions — “L.6”, “L.58” and “L.59” — each addressing a different aspect of the international community’s efforts in the area of preventing an arms race in outer space. All three documents are “based on similar General Assembly resolutions of previous years which received unconditional support from the absolute majority of UN member States” and have been “updated in light of recent developments in the area of prevention of an arms race in outer space”.

Turning to a draft resolution proposed by the United States, Japan and Argentina on weapons of mass destruction in outer space, she expressed concern that the text could be interpreted as an attempt “to legitimize the placement of any other weapons other than weapons of mass destruction in outer space”, potentially provoking “a conventional arms race in outer space”. Therefore, she proposed amendments to the draft.

Next, concerning the conventional weapons cluster, the Committee approved nine drafts, including one on lethal autonomous weapons systems ([A/C.1/79/L.77](#)) in which the Assembly would be concerned about the possible negative consequences and impact of those systems on global security and regional and international stability, including the risk of an emerging arms race, exacerbating existing conflicts, humanitarian crises and miscalculations lowering the threshold for an escalation of conflicts and proliferation, including to unauthorized recipients and non-State actors.

Further to the text, which was approved by 161 in favour to 3 against (Belarus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russian Federation), with 13 abstentions, the Assembly would underline that a comprehensive and inclusive approach will be required to address the full range of challenges and concerns posed by autonomous weapons systems, including consideration of legal, technological, ethical, humanitarian and security perspectives, in order to safeguard international peace and security.

The draft also affirms that international law, including the Charter, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law, applies in relation to autonomous weapons systems, and it reaffirms that any weapon, including autonomous weapons systems, that cannot be used in compliance with international humanitarian law must not be used.

The following drafts were also approved by recorded votes: Mine Ban Convention ([A/C.1/79/L.30](#)), by 166 in favour to 1 against (Russian Federation), with 15 abstentions; the Arms Trade Treaty ([A/C.1/79/L.60](#)), by 154 in favour to none against, with 24 abstentions; through-life conventional ammunition management ([A/C.1/79/L.63](#)), by 172 in favour to none against, with 3 abstentions (Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and Syria); and implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions ([A/C.1/79/L.71](#)), by 139 in favour to 1 against (Russian Federation), with 38 abstentions.

Approved without votes were texts on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them ([A/C.1/79/L.21](#)), the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects ([A/C.1/79/L.23](#)), the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons ([A/C.1/79/L.40](#)) and information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms ([A/C.1/79/L.71](#)).

General statements were made ahead of action on the drafts, including by the representative of Cambodia, who presented "L.30" on the Mine Ban Convention, sponsored also by Germany and Japan. He sought its broad support as that would "underscore our collective resolve to eliminating the harm caused by anti-personnel mines", he said.

Austria's representative, also speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the draft on lethal autonomous weapons systems aims to build on last year's text, "taking into account and reacting to the Secretary-General's report and its recommendations". The new text seeks to reflect the breadth of views submitted to the Secretary-General.

France's delegate said that the diversion and illicit trafficking of munitions play a crucial role in triggering and worsening armed conflicts, violence, and criminal and terrorist acts. Draft "L.63", sponsored by her country and Germany, was subject to technical updates to establish dates for the preparatory meeting for the States party meeting in 2027.

Disarmament

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