



Opening remarks by Mr. Sergei A. Ordzhonikidze  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

**Space Security 2010:  
From Foundations to Negotiations**

Event organized by the  
United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Palais des Nations, Geneva  
Wednesday, 29 March 2010

**Ms. Hitchens  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Palais des Nations for the annual conference on space security organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research – UNIDIR.**

**Allow me, first of all, to thank UNIDIR for the continued efforts to highlight the critical importance of space security. I should also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Governments of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation for their commitment to advancing the space security agenda. Let me likewise extend a warm welcome to the distinguished panellists for sharing with us their knowledge and views. The agenda before us clearly shows us the multifaceted nature of the challenge of ensuring security in space, and I value that these different dimensions are being highlighted.**

**The importance of space security simply cannot be overemphasized. Space is the only global commons that borders every community. It provides a unique potential nexus for scientific achievement, economic prosperity and strategic stability. Space-based assets are rapidly becoming part of our most critical national and international infrastructure. They support our communications and medical systems, our public services, our police forces and our militaries.**

**The United Nations has been at the heart of international efforts to strengthen the governance structure for space, including through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The United Nations family actively harnesses the potential of the peaceful uses of outer space for its peace and security and its development activities. Satellites are routinely used to manage natural resources and to facilitate relief efforts during emergencies. The collection of satellite imagery compiled over the years allows environmental change to be monitored and applied in decision-making processes for both developing and developed countries. Monitoring agricultural crop development from space is often crucial in predicting food shortages, helping to give sufficient lead-time to take preventive measures. Satellite imagery is used to produce maps to help peacekeepers on the ground, and the Security Council uses these in discussions on emergencies around the world.**

**It is my hope that the broader United Nations system will continue to enhance the collaboration to address the cross-cutting challenges with a view to ensuring optimum use of these tools. I appreciate greatly that the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is with us today to share his views on how to ensure a more integrated approach in this area.**

**As the peaceful uses of outer space grow in both number and scope, so too do their importance in the day-to-day lives of people across the globe. And as our dependency on space assets has increased, so have legitimate concerns about the security of these assets. This has stimulated an extensive debate over the nature and direction of space security and how best to balance civil, commercial and military uses of space. This annual conference is a key part of that debate.**

**Developments in technology that could be used to weaponize space and the growing problem of space debris, for example, threaten the current secure environment in space. This increases the likelihood of space becoming a conflict arena. States need to appreciate their shared vulnerability: what one actor does in space can affect all others – for better or for worse.**

**It is our mutual interest to keep space safe and to ensure that the benefits of its use are shared by all people. Growing insecurity of the space environment could not only destabilize international relations, but could also severely threaten space-based assets that have become increasingly vital for a wide range of essential human activities, worldwide.**

**Modern international law does not prohibit deployment in space of weapons, which do not belong to the Weapons of Mass Destruction category. However, such weapons – if deployed in space – would have a global reach, high readiness for use, disrupt our entire system of communications and have the capability to destroy space objects. Such weapons would only generate tensions among States. Weapons deployment in space by one State would inevitably lead to a chain-reaction and lead to a new type of arms race – now in outer space.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**The Conference on Disarmament is the principal body mandated to consider measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Last year, when we came together for this annual conference, the Conference on Disarmament had just adopted a Programme of Work for that session. The Programme of Work included the establishment of a Working Group “to discuss substantively, without limitation, all issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space”.**

**Regrettably, this did not lead to the initiation of substantive work in the Conference – and so far it has not been possible to adopt a Programme of Work for this year’s session. This impacts significantly on the ability of the international community to take forward efforts for greater space security. I take this opportunity to call on the Members of the Conference to continue to work – in the spirit of flexibility and compromise that prevailed last year – to fulfil its central role in international peace and security. As the title of this conference indicates: the foundations are there, and we need to move in the direction of negotiations.**

**It is my hope that the momentum that was generated in disarmament and non-proliferation throughout all of 2009 can be sustained to advance also this key security issue. The bilateral agreement – finalized only a few days ago – between the US and the Russian Federation on new and verifiable reductions in their strategic offensive arsenals through a legally-binding treaty sends an important signal of growing political will to extend disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The international community needs to act on this signal, with a positive outcome of the forthcoming NPT Conference – and eventually through agreement in the Conference on Disarmament.**

**There can be no doubt that we need to expand and enhance our efforts to ensure that outer space remains free for exploration and use by and in the interest of all mankind. We need to strengthen the norms, institutions and legal regimes concerning space security.**

**The sustainable use of outer space is a shared responsibility for the international community. We need to show that it is a responsibility we take seriously.**

**Thank you very much.**