

PREFACE

For 50 years, human activity in outer space has been guided by the principle of the “peaceful uses of space”, first enunciated in 1958 by US President Dwight Eisenhower.^a Although the term “peaceful purposes” was never clearly defined, it was generally understood to include military, commercial, and scientific activity in space, but to exclude the placement of weapons or the targeting of objects in space. But recent developments suggest that this norm against the weaponization of space is now threatened. The Bush Administration withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in June 2003 and has committed to deploying a multi-layered missile defence system, the first stage of which could be ready by 2004, with testing of a space-based element as early as 2008. As part of this pressure for missile defences, elements within the US Department of Defense (DoD) are pushing hard to expand the military uses of space to include war-fighting capabilities from, in, and into space.

Internationally, there is broad consensus in opposition to the weaponization of space, reaffirmed annually by virtually unanimous support for a United Nations General Assembly resolution on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS).^b Although there is clearly broad international support for the creation of a legal instrument prohibiting the placement of weapons in outer space, to date there is still no agreement on

^a Exchange between Dwight Eisenhower and Nikolai Bulganin, Chairman, Council of Ministers, USSR, 13 January 1958 [Online]. Available from the Eisenhower Institute, in “The Historical Context” at <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/fos/newfrontier/letters.htm>.

^b The 2002 First Committee vote on the PAROS resolution was 156 in favour, zero against, with Israel and the US abstaining. United Nations General Assembly, A/C.1/56/L.30, First Committee Voting Record, Fifty-seventh Session, 21 October 2002 [Online]. Available at: www.reachingcriticalwill.org/1com/1com02/vote/voteindex.html. See also the analysis of this discussion in Fiona Simpson, “Anxiety, Hope and Cynicism: the 2002 United Nations First Committee”, *Disarmament Diplomacy*, No. 68, December 2002/January 2003.

ways and means of achieving such a ban. At the same time, talks on PAROS in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) have been blocked by US opposition since 1995.

It was with a view to exploring these dilemmas and developing options for future actions that an international conference on outer space and global security was held in Geneva on 26-27 November 2002. Jointly convened by the Simons Centre for Peace and Disarmament Studies, at the Liu Institute for Global Issues, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and Project Ploughshares, with support from the Simons Foundation and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Conference brought together experts from military, industry, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representing countries with interests across the range of civilian and military space activity. The speakers gave presentations on a variety of technical, political and legal issues regarding space use and space security, including current civilian and military uses of space, technical and political considerations regarding space weapons, the legal regime governing space use, and the prospects and problems of developing a space weapons ban.

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