

Opening Remarks by Dr Peter Martinez
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Enhancing Space Security Through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviour
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good morning, distinguished colleagues and friends. My name is Peter Martinez, and I am the Executive Director of the Secure World Foundation. It is my great pleasure and honour to address a few opening remarks to all of you this morning. I am sorry that I am not able to travel to beautiful Buenos Aires this week, a city that I have greatly enjoyed visiting in the past.

We are here to support the work of the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. This group, which was established Pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution [76/231](#), has met three times in Geneva since May 2022 under the very capable leadership of my friend and esteemed colleague, Mr Helmut Lagos Koller.

Given the current extremely difficult geopolitical situation and the challenges being faced by multilateralism at the moment, this working group has made very encouraging progress, all things considered. This is in no small way due to the excellent skill and leadership of Helmut Lagos, and we are delighted that he is able to participate in this workshop in person.

The origin of these workshops began, like many good ideas, over a meal. Last May, during the first OEWG meeting in Geneva, Helmut and I had lunch together and we discussed ways and means of enhancing the capacity of more States to engage in the discussions of the open-ended working group, commensurate with their degree of development and space capabilities. We thought that one way to do this would be through organizing a series of regional dialogues, where we could bring together actors from a given region to debate the issues and better equip

themselves to form considered national and regional positions on the topics of discussion in the OEWG.

Since then, Secure World Foundation and UNIDIR have partnered to organize a number of regional workshops around the world in support of the OEWG. The first regional workshop for the Latin American and Caribbean region was held almost exactly a year ago in Santiago, Chile. The genesis of today's workshop can be traced back to a conversation that I had at the Santiago workshop with Dr Carolina Catani, of the Legal Affairs department in CONAE, who suggested to have a follow-up meeting in Buenos Aires, and thanks to the enthusiasm, energy and efforts of Dr Catani and her colleagues in CONAE and the Argentinian MFA, we are here today. I would like to thank Carolina for her initiative and determination to turn the idea into reality.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to our partners in the Argentinian MFA, CONAE and UNIDIR for the excellent and fruitful working relationship on this important issue. Through our combination of efforts and resources we are able to meet here today.

Let me now say a few words to situate this workshop in its wider context.

Those of us who have been involved in space diplomacy for some time will know how difficult it has been to make progress on the difficult issue of space security. In part this has had to do with the fundamentally different approaches to tackling the issue, which in my mind has created a kind of false dichotomy of legally binding versus non-binding approaches that has divided actors into different camps, each with their strongly held views on the right way to ensure space security and to prevent outer space becoming a domain of conflict.

At the same time, the pace of developments in the global space arena, especially driven by the rapid growth of the commercial space sector in recent years, has meant that the situation in space grows more serious each day, and with it a sense of urgency to adopt some effective governance measures to ensure the safety, security, and sustainability of space operations.

A behavioural norms-based approach offers the possibility to bridge this dichotomy by creating fertile ground for developing common understandings of what constitutes responsible behaviours and for promoting commonly agreed practices of States that could ultimately pave the way for the adoption of legally binding instruments.

One thing is clear; this is intrinsically a multilateral issue that can only be addressed comprehensively in the multilateral format.

To this end, the clear multilateral mandate contained in UN GA Res 76/231 that established the OEWG, is in our view, a very significant step forward to ensure that these most important discussions are held within the framework of the United Nations.

We were very encouraged by the engagement, flexibility and cooperative spirit shown by the delegations that attended the three sessions of the OEWG to date and we hope that regional workshops such as this will contribute to enhancing the outcome of the deliberations of the fourth and final session of the OEWG at the end of this month.

The organizing team for this workshop has put together an excellent program to address the various dimensions of the OEWG discussions. Today, we will begin by setting the scene to explore the value of space infrastructure and services across the Latin American and Caribbean region and the corresponding importance of space security in the region. When it comes to space security, States and other stakeholders have different perspectives and priorities as to what needs to be addressed. It is necessary that everyone knows and understands these differences in order to reach a common understanding on the subject.

We will then turn to a discussion of possible recommendations on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour that have emerged during the OEWG sessions.

Tomorrow, we will consider the role of binding and non-binding regulations in mitigating threats to outer space activities, and we will consider the technical, diplomatic, and political challenges associated with voluntary non-binding mechanisms, such as those envisaged in the OEWG.

We will end the day tomorrow with a group discussion on the norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour that the Latin American and Caribbean States would like to see in the final report of the OEWG. Time permitting, I hope you will also be able to reflect on the next steps to enhance space security after the completion of the OEWG process.

When it comes to possible norms or principles of responsible behaviour, quite a number of excellent suggestions have been made during the OEWG sessions. We have a session dedicated to discussing these ideas, so I will not mention them here, except for one, which I think is a very important and very timely. This is the suggestion to build on the growing support for a moratorium against destructive tests of direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles.

The testing of such anti-satellite weapons in space generates huge amounts of debris that could potentially have irreversible and long-lasting disruptive consequences for satellite operators and end-users of space data and services alike because of the indiscriminate nature of the threat posed by space debris.

To date, some eighty anti-satellite tests have been performed by a number of countries, and thousands of pieces of debris were created. Many of these fragments remain in orbit posing a collision risk to active satellites and human spaceflight. More debris has been created by anti-satellite tests than accidental orbital collisions. While debris proliferation by accidental collisions is often unpreventable, debris creation by the deliberate destruction of satellites is *entirely* preventable.

A growing number of countries regards such destructive anti-satellite testing to be contrary to the principle of due regard contained in Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty. Last year, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 77/41 calling on countries to commit not to perform such

tests. In total, 155 countries, including most of the countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, voted in favour of that resolution.

To date, 13 countries have come forward to make the commitment called for in resolution 77/41. But that's not enough. We need many more countries, with a wide spread of space capabilities, to make such a commitment if this is to become an emerging international norm, and I hope some Latin American and Caribbean countries will come forward to make this commitment as a way of helping to safeguard the space environment for future generations.

These are very important matters and I want to thank all of you for making time in your busy schedules to participate in this dialogue. Again, I extend my warmest appreciation and the assurance of my highest regards for our partners in the Argentinian MFA, CONAE and UNIDIR. I also want to thank my SWF colleague Victoria Samson and UNIDIR's Almudena Azcárate Ortega, who worked very closely with our Argentinian colleagues to organize this event.

I wish you all a stimulating and informative dialogue over the next two days and I look forward to the seeing outcomes of your deliberations.

Thank you.