



**United Nations Office
for Disarmament Affairs**

**Welcome Remarks for the 24th ROK-UN Joint Conference on
Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues**

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As delivered



4 December 2025
New York

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 24th edition of this conference organised jointly by the Republic of Korea and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The theme of this conference couldn't be more timely. Unfortunately, the international security environment continues to deteriorate. States are spending record amounts on armaments. Various technologies advance at unprecedented speed, with not sufficient governance frameworks. Tensions among major military actors remain dangerously high. And the human cost of weapons has never been higher.

We must continue to seek a path toward the resumption of negotiations in the standing bodies of the disarmament machinery. At the same time, it is critical that we seek to anticipate and address emerging risks to international peace and security.

Developments in science and technology have long posed risks, while also providing solutions. This is especially true of the outer space domain.

Today, outer space is no longer the preserve of a few nations. It is a shared heritage upon which all societies depend. Any threats affecting space systems would not be confined to outer space - they would directly endanger peace on Earth. The military use of outer space also entangles – and increasingly so – conventional and nuclear weapons systems.

Tensions in outer space are rising. These trends go beyond the growing congestion, competition and contestation we have been witnessing over the past decade. States are increasingly reliant on outer space to support their military operations. Allegations have emerged regarding the development and testing of possible weapon technologies in earth orbit. Close approaches to satellites operated by others have become common. More States are preparing for the possibility of armed conflict extending into earth orbit.

Thankfully, these dangers are well recognized. This has been reflected in the discussions held in intergovernmental bodies established in recent years under the broad umbrella of preventing an arms race in outer space. The Secretary-General has also underscored the urgency of progress in this area in his New Agenda for Peace.

It was also encouraging that, in the Pact for the Future, States agreed to “advance further measures and appropriate international negotiations to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects, which engage all relevant stakeholders, consistent with the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty”.

That commitment was made in the context of actions aimed at seizing the opportunities associated with new and emerging technologies and addressing the potential risks posed by their misuse.

I was encouraged by the important step taken by the General Assembly last year, when it consolidated the two parallel workstreams into a single open-ended working group on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in all its aspects.

I welcome the working group’s agreement on its agenda and indicative timetable for its remaining sessions. I hope the group can now proceed swiftly to its substantive work and development of recommendations that cover all vectors of threat through all feasible means.

Against this backdrop, this conference could not come at a better time. The topics of each of the sessions have been designed to stimulate open and frank discussions. In this connection, I hope this will provide food-for-thought for the forthcoming sessions of the open-ended working group on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects, which will commence the more focused part of its substantive work in July of next year.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs remains at your disposal to support your efforts to work cooperatively to ensure that outer space remains a safe, sustainable and peaceful domain.

I wish you all a fruitful and successful conference.
