

Speaker Notes for OSI Webinar on Canada and the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats

David Kendall – Moderator

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David Kendall is the past Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (2016-2017), and previously served in senior positions with the Canadian Space Agency. David is also a Fellow of the Outer Space Institute.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Outer Space Institute, we are a network of world-leading space experts united by our commitment to highly innovative, transdisciplinary research in order to address grand challenges facing the continued use and exploration of outer space. The Institute is comprised of physical scientists, social scientists, lawyers, engineers, industry leaders, and policy makers. By breaking down barriers that prevent people in different fields from working together, the Institute aims to further challenge assumptions that are often taken for granted in building public policy. (www.outerspaceinstitute.ca).

As introduction to today's topic, a United Kingdom resolution proposing a new UN forum – an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours” – was passed by the UNGA 1st Committee on 1 November 2021 (163 for, 8 against, 9 abstentions) and subsequently formally approved by the General Assembly on 24 December with Hellmut Lagos Koller of Chile as Chairperson. Ref: A/RES/76/231. The WG held an organizational session this week in Geneva and was scheduled to hold its first substantive session, also in Geneva, between February 14-18, however, by virtue of an objection by the Russian Federation during the organizational session, the first substantive session will be postponed, likely to May.

Canada has strongly supported this initiative as have many in civil society, including Project Ploughshares, as well as the private sector seeing a mutual interest in curbing the space arms race and developing “rules of the road” for this vulnerable if increasingly important and congested environment. Statements by various Member States, non-governmental organization and other entities can be found at: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/topics/outerspace-sg-report-outer-space-2021/>.

The OSI has assembled a distinguished panel who will provide insight into and discuss what this new process means for space security diplomacy and what role Canada can play in it. The panel presentations will be followed by a question and answer period so please write your questions in the Q&A box of the ZOOM screen. Please make your questions as concise as possible and if you have a particular panelist to whom you would like to direct your question, please indicate it.

The presentations by our panelists will be recorded and this recording, plus a summary report of the discussion will be provided on the OSI website. It is very important to note that the discussion portion of today's webinar will be conducted under the Chatham House Rule; in other words, there will be no attribution with respect to the interventions by any of those contributing to this part of the event.

I now have the pleasure of introducing the first of our panelists, Paul Meyer, who conceived this event. Paul will provide a brief summary of the **Origins and Prospects for the OEWG**. Paul is a Fellow in International Security and Adjunct Professor of International Studies at Simon Fraser University, and a former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament. Paul is also a Fellow of the Outer Space Institute.

Canada's Approach to the OEWG

Jessica West is a Senior Researcher at the Canadian peace research institute Project Ploughshares, where her research and policy work is focused on technology, security, and governance with a particular interest in outer space.

Understanding the Dynamics

Sarah Thiele is a fifth-year undergraduate student at the University of British Columbia completing a combined honours degree in Physics and Astronomy, and a Junior Fellow of the Outer Space Institute.

A Test Ban for Destructive Anti-satellite Weapons (ASATs)

Michael Byers is the Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law, a Professor of International Relations at the University of British Columbia, and a co-director of the Outer Space Institute.

Aaron Boley is the Canada Research Chair in Planetary Astronomy, a Professor of Physics and Astronomy at the University of British Columbia, and a co-director of the Outer Space Institute.