

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté
Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad
Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit

Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO
Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF

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His Excellency Robert D. McCallum Jr.
US Ambassador
Embassy of the United States of America
Moonah Place
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Your Excellency

I write on behalf of the Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) at the beginning of *Keep Space for Peace Week* and *UN World Space Week, October 4 – 10, 2007* concerning negotiations on a treaty for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS).

Our organisation considers that any deployment of space-based weapons would represent a most grave threat to the balance of international security. Because deployment of weapons in space would undermine existing arms control treaties (in particular nuclear weapons treaties), we believe it is not overstating it to say that deployment of space-based weapons could lead to a new round of nuclear arms races. As an illustration of the potential of such decisions to provoke an arms race, in January this year, Russian President Vladimir Putin cited US plans for space-based weapons as the reason behind the Chinese anti-satellite weapons test of 11 January, 2007 (*Washington Post*, Thursday, January 25, 2007).

Internationally, we are at a rare and precious moment in history when the United States because of its predominance is in a unique position to lead on the development of a treaty which could prevent for all time an arms race in outer space. At this particular time, when no other nation state can match the United States in developing space-based weapons and weapons systems, the opportunity presents itself for the US to take a statesmanlike stance to lead on negotiations for PAROS. However, the United States is doing precisely the opposite by continuing to block negotiations on the PAROS treaty. The US statement that, since an arms race in outer space does not yet exist, it is not necessary to take action,

does not stand the test of logic. (For instance, in the Conference on Disarmament, June 13, 2006, the US said, "... there is no - repeat, no - problem in outer space for arms control to solve.") The optimum time to take action to prevent the weaponisation of space is well before any arms race has a chance to develop.

If the US continues to vote in the First Committee and in the Conference on Disarmament against PAROS, it will be hard to avoid the conclusion that the US is seeking to seize this unique and precious moment in history not for disarmament but for domination through weaponisation of space.

We note that the Bush Administration has authorised very large amounts of US Federal funding for research and development on space-based weapons systems. For instance, by 2015, the US is expected to have spent 800 billion US dollars on "Missile Defence" systems. By 2035, that amount will be 1.2 trillion.

These amounts of money allocated in the US budget to research and development on space weapons systems are stupendous and exorbitant sums which are to be diverted from the taxpayer - from the public purse - to those very few corporations such as Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Orbital Sciences Corporation, which stand to benefit from the manufacture of these systems and weapons. As we consider that this taxpayers' money could be better spent on human and environmental needs, we regard this as little more than a legalised robbery of the great mass of people.

We respectfully request that you convey to the United States President the very strong opposition of our organisation to the deployment of space-based weapons and weapons systems. We believe that space should be *kept for peace*.

We therefore respectfully urge the United States to stop blocking negotiations on a treaty for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, and to cease research and development on weapons and nuclear power in space.

We thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

Cathy Picone
National Coordinator