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UN Approves Russia-led Proposal To Limit Militarization of Space

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The initiative calls on nations to refrain from being the first to place military weapons in outer space.

The United Nations General Assembly has approved a Russian-led resolution calling for nations to refrain from being the first to deploy weapons into outer space, in spite of U.S. resistance and European silence on the proposed measure, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The resolution was first drafted by Russia in 2014, but was rejected by the United States and other nations last year, and then again this year, when the draft resolution was considered by a GA committee focusing on issues of arms control.

On Tuesday, 129 nations represented in the General Assembly voted to adopt the measure, which was co-sponsored by 40 nations — including China and Syria — and is known as the "no first placement" initiative.

“It is noteworthy that the only government objecting to the substance of our initiative is the United States, which for many years has stood in almost complete isolation trying to block successive efforts of the international community to prevent an arms race in outer space,” the Foreign Ministry said.

The initiative calls on nations to refrain from being the first to place military weapons in outer space, thereby preventing a new and potentially devastating arms race between the world's leading space-faring nations — Russia, China and the United States, who are all working on space weapons.

Europe, which has an effective multi-national space program of its own, has consistently abstained from ruling on the Russian proposal. The United States maintains that Russia's resolution does not adequately define space weapons, and ignores an entire class of ground-launched space arms — such as anti-satellite missiles tested by China.

The resolution is nonbinding, but calls for negotiations held at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to put forth a legally binding international treaty preventing weapons from being deployed in space, and calls on all states to adopt national commitments to the resolution.

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