

(Mr. Fan Guoxiang, China)

In my statement today, I wish to offer some comments on the prevention of arms race in outer space. The prevention of an arms race in outer space has become an issue of increasing concern to the peoples throughout the world. This is well justified. There is a Chinese saying, "The tree leaves do not rustle unless there is wind". With the intensified efforts of the two major space Powers to develop space weapons, people cannot but worry about the dire prospect that weapons might be deployed in outer space. When the first man-made Earth satellite entered into orbit and when the first Apollo spacecraft made a successful landing on the Moon, the people of the world warmly hailed these remarkable achievements as pioneers to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space by man. At that time, people were not concerned about an arms race in outer space.

However, today, 30 years later, outer space is congested with various types of satellites and space vehicles for military purposes. Besides, as land-based weapons capable of hitting objects in outer space appeared a long time ago, the emergence of exotic space-based weapons is no longer something inconceivable or remote. It has become a well-known fact that in recent years the two major space Powers have increased their efforts to develop space weapons. While one major space Power, investing huge amounts of financial and human resources in developing space weapons, has claimed from time to time that "breakthroughs" have been achieved, the other major space Power, not willing to be outdone, has openly declared that it will never allow itself to lag behind. Chasing each other, the two are locked in a fierce competition. Naturally, people will not turn a blind eye to all this. Although the two are conducting negotiations on space weapons -- talks between them are better than no talks -- they have not hitherto been able to make any substantive progress in banning space weapons. At present, they differ only on the speed and scope of the development of space weapons. What they are seeking is a timetable based on their respective needs for the development of space weapons rather than a true prohibition of all types of space weapons. The stark reality that the two major space Powers are vying with each other in the development of space weapons has naturally aroused grave concern in the international community. The fact that the Conference on Disarmament was able to establish smoothly an Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space fairly early in 1987, is in a certain sense, a reflection of the sense of urgency that the people of all countries have in their grave concern about the arms race in outer space.

The international community has another reason for its concern about the arms race in outer space, for it will lead to a qualitative escalation of the arms race between the two super-Powers. Their strategic nuclear forces are now in a rough equilibrium, with neither side being able to overwhelm the other. An extension of the arms race into outer space is bound to bring about new changes in the strategic stances of the two sides, make nuclear disarmament even more complicated and difficult and exacerbate the spiral escalation of the arms race, thus jeopardizing international peace and security. The grave consequences of such extension of the arms race into outer space affect more than the security of the two major space Powers. Many countries are already worrying that the various types of missiles with nuclear warheads produced by the two major nuclear Powers might fly to and fro over their airspace. Once weapons are deployed in outer space, disaster may befall any country at any moment. The peoples throughout the world are naturally more worried about this. Therefore, prevention of an arms race in outer space and of the weaponization of outer space is an issue of major importance that concerns the security of the people of all countries.