

(Mrs. Theorin, Sweden)

Sweden welcomes the re-establishment of the Committee this year and the commencement of its substantive work. It is indeed of the utmost importance to build upon the common ground that has been created in order to achieve progress in the efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Undoubtedly the key to solving some of the fundamental issues involved is to be found in the bilateral talks between the United States and the Soviet Union on strategic and space weapons. But the deployment of space-based strategic defence systems would also affect the security of other countries. Indirectly, as such deployments might alter the strategic relationship and thus have consequences for overall stability. Directly, because possible defence systems could, at least in theory, be provided with an additional capacity to be used against targets other than strategic weapons, in space or on Earth. For this reason, the deployment of space weapons is a source of concern for the whole international community. There is a strong case for multilateral involvement.

Another aspect of the further militarization of outer space that might constitute a direct threat to the vital national interests of many States is the development of anti-satellite weapons (ASAT). Many States other than the two major nuclear Powers have developed considerable space programmes and have made large investments in peaceful space activities. It is legitimate for -- yes incumbent on -- members of the CD to address, in a substantive way, questions related to the protection of peaceful activities in outer space.

The Ad hoc Committee should explore the possibility of verifiable and legally binding instruments prohibiting ASAT weapons and ASAT warfare. A ban on ASAT weapons should include a prohibition on development, testing and deployment as well as use. Existing ASAT systems should be destroyed. However, in order to consider concrete measures to prevent an arms race in outer space, further work is called for. The review of the legal framework has to be completed, and the Conference must seek to define and identify the technologies and weapons systems to be addressed.

In February this year, I mentioned the possibility of setting up a group of technical experts to deal with these issues. Such a group of experts could assist, inter alia, by working out technical definitions of space weapons, specifying the relevant technologies, and addressing the technical aspects of verification.