

(Mr. Dubey, India)

There is more than adequate evidence to show that the militarization of outer space has already begun in a big way, and that if unchecked, it is soon going to acquire unmanageable and uncontrollable proportions. While it is true that since its very inception in the 1950s, advance in space technology has contributed to enhancing the force, accuracy and sophistication of the weapon systems of the nuclear-weapon Powers, the last few years have seen the development of directly and clearly identifiable military activities born out of space technology. What is more is that this increasing military orientation of space technology has led to the development of the war machines of the super-Powers containing some of the most dangerous weapon systems, such as the thermo-nuclear warheads, the strategic and intermediate-range missiles and bombers and the space-based means to manipulate a total planetary war. The latest to enter in the field are the anti-satellite weapons and the space-based ABM system.

These latest weapons are no longer confined to science fiction; they are fast becoming a reality. Pronouncements have been made at the highest level indicating intentions to develop these weapons. Sizeable amounts of resources running into billions of dollars have been allocated for the purpose of research and development of these weapons. One of the ASAT systems is already in place, whereas tests have been carried out for the development of a more sophisticated one. The repeated attempt to find loopholes in the existing legal instruments in order to go ahead with the development of these weapons is yet another proof, if proof is needed. Moreover we find that already the language of rationalization so far associated with the nuclear-arms race based on the doctrine of parity or deterrence, has begun to be used in the context of the arms race in outer space also. A highly placed official of one of the super-Powers has recently stated that his Government has decided to develop its ASAT system because the other side is also engaged in the race, making it necessary for his country to catch up and deny the other side unilateral control of outer space.

Against this background it is naive to believe that the programme already launched will remain confined to the stage of research and development. Technological developments of military significance have a momentum of their own that creates a forward drive for the deployment of the weapons once they become technically feasible. The technological problems that remain to be solved also do not constitute an insurmountable hurdle because the past experience of the development of sophisticated weapon systems have shown that given the commitment of Governments, such problems can be overcome and also because it has been publicly stated that these weapon systems are worth developing even if it may not be possible to solve all the technological problems.

It is, therefore, not too soon to examine the serious implications of these new weapon systems and explain these implications to the people of the world. It is my intention to devote most of the remaining part of my statement to this purpose.

A relatively less serious, but more talked about, implication of the deployment of these systems is that it will render the doctrine of deterrence redundant, and would on the whole have a destabilizing effect on the international security system. Many of us here would not shed tears on account of this