

delegations, with the aim of facilitating any future consideration of the issues.

13. The Committee also benefitted from the scientific and technical contributions of experts from various delegations who addressed the specific issues and initiatives under consideration in the Committee relevant to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

A. Examination and identification of issues relevant to the prevention of an arms race in outer space

14. There was general recognition of the importance of the bilateral negotiations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America and it was stressed that bilateral and multilateral efforts were complementary. Many delegations emphasized that those negotiations did not diminish the urgency and the importance of multilateral efforts and reaffirmed that, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 45/55A, the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, had the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

15. The Group of 21 considered that there was an urgent need to address this important agenda item so as to achieve progress. For this reason, the Group took a flexible position on the question of the programme of work although it would have preferred the Committee to work under a negotiating mandate. It was felt that the new methodology applied to the work of the Committee would create new opportunities to advance from generality to specificity, allowing the Committee to enhance its functioning in qualitative terms.

16. The Group of Western States welcomed the adoption of the same programme of work as in the previous years and equal allocation of time between the three main items of the programme of work. It thought that this formal framework implemented with due flexibility provided the best structure for the discussions while enabling each delegation that so wished to express its position and to make a contribution to the common search for areas of convergence envisaged in the programme of work.

17. Many delegations of the Group of 21 underlined that in an era where the confrontation between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had eased, other states on planet earth had reasons to hope that arms deployed on ground would not be supplemented with a threat from space that would provoke a counter and help in spiralling the arms race further into outer space.