

(Mr. Gonsalves, India)

I wish to place special emphasis in my statement today on two issues regarded as vital in the Six Nation Initiative. These relate to a comprehensive test ban and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

My Government remains completely unconvinced by arguments relating to the possibility of defence against nuclear weapons. In the pursuit of their respective military doctrines the super-Powers have developed various means to deliver nuclear weapons. However, the means of delivery are not synonymous with the weapons themselves. We believe that it is not only not feasible to erect foolproof defence against the delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons but that it is also technologically impossible to thus immunize nations or populations against the use of nuclear weapons. So long as these weapons remain they can inevitably be delivered by some means or the other and no defence will remain impregnable. The pursuit of defensive technology is itself riddled with so many problems and contradictions that there is no guarantee of the so-called "defensive transition" ever materializing. The fundamental reality of the nuclear age is that the mutual vulnerability of populations to nuclear attack is a direct consequence of the characteristics of nuclear weapons. The veneration of deterrence is the existential consequence of the presence of nuclear weapons. It is but a symptom of the nuclear threat and the best way, logically, to do away with the symptom of the nuclear threat is to eliminate the basic malady, i.e. nuclear weapons themselves. The arguments about transcending deterrence through erection of space-based defence are accordingly unconvincing.

To aggravate the situation there have been recent disturbing reports about strategic defence arrangements being supplemented by the development of appropriate offensive capability. In any case it is generally acknowledged that systems ostensibly of a defensive nature planned to render nuclear weapons obsolete automatically acquire an offensive first-strike capability against targets in space and on land. What is facing us is a frightening combination of a new offensive and defensive arms race on Earth and in space, the inevitability of which is based on space arms being developed by one side, resulting in automatic retaliatory action by the other.