

(Mr. Gonsalves, India)

While the testing and deployment of the former is prohibited under the ABM Treaty there are no such prohibitions in regard to the latter. Current space technology allows for development of ABM systems through the ASAT loophole. Moreover, the ABM Treaty itself does not ban the development and testing of a limited category of ABM systems whose deployment is permitted. The advent of directed energy beams and developments related to high speed kinetic energy weapons and the assimilation of all related technologies into a single project may before long result in the development of both ABM weapons and ASAT weapons despite the existing legal restraints. A mandatory ban on ASAT weapons could contribute effectively towards the prevention of the emergence of such new weapons. Such a ban should include prohibitions on testing and deployment of ASAT weapons as well as dismantling of existing systems under appropriate verification.

We have heard arguments about the difficulties inherent in defining an ASAT weapon as a satellite can be rendered inoperational in a variety of ways. To meet this objection we would propose examination of each of these various ways and prescription of suitable measures to protect satellites from non-destructive interference with their functioning on the one hand and from dedicated ASAT weapons on the other. The major military Powers should manifest the basic political will to omit the ASAT option from their reckless global strategies. The Mexico Declaration of 7 August has called on the United States and the Soviet Union to halt the testing of such weapons in order to facilitate the conclusion of an international treaty on their prohibition. This Conference should facilitate that process and its speedy conclusion.

The Conference on Disarmament has an overriding responsibility to act to prevent the emergence of space weapons since unlike other weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear and chemical weapons these would be the first weapons to emerge since our Conference came into being. The Ad Hoc Committee dealing with this question has concluded its programme of work for this session under its seriously flawed mandate. My delegation has followed the proceedings of the Ad Hoc Committee with care and interest. We admire the dedication and skill with which the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Bayart of Mongolia, has conducted its work during this session. We regret to note, however, that the exercise being conducted in this Conference is too severely constrained by the positions of some delegations to be of any practical utility. My delegation for instance, finds no justification for an interminable examination of existing legal instruments. The scopes of these treaties are in our view self-evident. If, however, doubts about their interpretations are being raised these can be resolved only in the process of fresh negotiations. The most important instrument in this regard is the Outer Space Treaty which had codified in the mid sixties the commitments of its States Parties to keep outer space free from dangerous weapons as identified in terms of the then prevalent technologies. While the spirit of that Treaty is clearly against the use of force against space objects in general, the Treaty is silent about the rights of the contracting parties to develop, test and produce weapons for use in future space wars. Even the limited existing restraint on the use of ASAT weapons is negated by the assertion that the Outer Space Treaty would cease to apply in the event of the outbreak of war involving space Powers. In any case, an arms race is caused by the very introduction of the weapons in question regardless of the