

Mr. DUBEY (India):

I intend today to speak on agenda item 5, Prevention of an arms race in outer space. The perils of the extension of the arms race into outer space were clearly seen at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Final Document that emerged from that session called for appropriate international negotiations in order to prevent such an arms race. It took four years after that to get an item on this subject included on the agenda of the then Committee on Disarmament. And during the last two years that this item has been on the agenda, in spite of the overwhelming desire of the international community, reflected in various General Assembly resolutions, to commence negotiations on this subject with a view to reaching an agreement or agreements, this body has not been able to commence any work at all on this crucial issue. During this period, the situation on the ground with regard to the arms race in outer space, has undergone a rapid and alarming transformation. Developments of catastrophic implications for the fate of mankind are taking place in this field. And, yet, the Conference on Disarmament remains paralysed for want of a mandate for the ad hoc committee to be set up to discuss this subject.

Some two thousand years ago, there was a king in Italy who was fiddling while Rome was burning. Today, there are forty distinguished representatives of sovereign governments members of the Conference on Disarmament and entrusted with perhaps the gravest responsibility of modern times, quibbling over a mandate for their work on this subject while outer space is on its way to being militarized to the point of saturation. The difference, however, is that whereas in spite of the Roman king's fiddling, the city of Rome survived, the consequences of our quibbling might very well deny the human race the last chance of its survival.