

(Mr. Ekéus, Sweden)

Permit me in this statement also to make some brief remarks related to another item on our agenda, the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The continued deliberations of the Ad hoc Committee, under the able leadership of Ambassador Pugliese, have been very useful. The Committee has benefited from valuable presentations, such as that of the Canadian PAXSAT for space-to-space and space-to-earth verification. The analysis of legal and technical matters, as well as definitions, which has taken place this year has made a valuable contribution.

Substantive proposals have been made. I can, for instance, refer to the main provisions of a treaty text submitted by two delegations, the German Democratic Republic and Mongolia. As nothing indicating the contrary has been brought forward in the Committee, my delegation also finds quite interesting the idea voiced by Argentina that the Conference's report could register statements by member States that they have not permanently deployed weapons in space.

The centrepiece of the work of the Committee has been and, in the opinion of my delegation, must continue to be proposals and initiatives aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. Only the need to examine possible measures to that end warrants the efforts of the Conference on the item. That such an examination takes place does as such not prejudice the conclusions to be drawn by the Committee. Statements made have illustrated substantial differences of opinion among States on the adequacy of present legal barriers to an arms race in outer space, on the urgency of additional measures and on the scope and contents of such measures. It has also been disputed whether such measures could be verified at all. The fact that positions are indeed divergent does not, however, detract from, but add to the importance of continued and deepened consideration of the matter.

One aspect of military space activities that might constitute a threat to the vital national interests of many States is the development of anti-satellite weapons. There is a strong case for pursuing the matter of a global prohibition of ASAT weapons and ASAT warfare. A comprehensive ban would cover the development, testing, deployment and use of such weapons.

A number of political and technical problems would have to be solved before such a comprehensive ban could be realized. It has been emphasized that a workable definition of ASAT weapons must be laid down. Verification arrangements, possibly of a very far-reaching character, would have to be devised. The Ad hoc Committee should continue to explore problems of this nature in order to prepare the ground for substantive negotiations.