

(Mr. Carasales, Argentina)

This collective interest explains the frustration felt by many at the uselessness of our efforts to set up an ad hoc committee, efforts brought to a standstill by the difficulties raised by the word "negotiations" in whatever context it is sought to introduce it. The frequent mention of that word and what it implies in the recent bilateral exchanges is something which must be greeted with surprise but at the same time welcomed.

Nobody questions the possibility, and in some cases even the desirability, of direct contacts between the two leading Powers in the field of the use of space, but these should never be to the detriment of the multilateral approach to disarmament, a conquest -- if it can be called that -- which all claim to support, and which therefore should be preserved and promoted.

It should not be forgotten that the procedures of the Conference on Disarmament are flexible, despite which its possibilities have by no means been fully utilized. At a given stage in the negotiations, specific items and issues may need to be considered temporarily in groups of limited membership. This is feasible within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, and in our opinion would be compatible with the multilateral approach which was achieved with great effort and which we should maintain and strengthen, as security is indivisible and no problem in this field is exclusively bilateral or can fail to affect the others. It is to be hoped that with regard to this issue as well as others the broad possibilities offered by the Conference on Disarmament will be taken into account and duly utilized by all concerned, and in particular in the field of space, if the current attempts to explore other avenues are not fruitful.

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(Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations)

We find ourselves in a special situation which is at once a threat and a challenge. The threat arises from the extension of the arms race into the new dimension of outer space and from the emergence of new weapon systems which are difficult to verify. This trend will destabilize still further an already precarious situation, which has its origin in the atmosphere of mutual suspicion prevailing between the two leading nuclear Powers.

The problem of preventing the arms race in outer space has been before this Conference since 1962. With regard to the establishment of a subsidiary body to make a thorough study of the question and undertake negotiations, there are obviously serious differences of approach, which I hope can be overcome. Any effort -- bilateral or multilateral -- which might lead to the final objective of preventing an arms race in outer space must be encouraged. The General Assembly has assigned an important role to the process of multilateral negotiation in this Conference, and that role should be fulfilled.