

I do not wish to raise here legal matters which should appropriately be dealt with in the Legal Sub-Committee meeting in Geneva next month. However, I should make clear our intention to call for parallel studies of legal implications of this matter, as part of a phased and comprehensive response. We have in mind proposing in particular a review of the existing international instruments adopted by the Outer Space Committee in earlier years to determine whether there is a need for elaboration of an additional instrument governing the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, either in the form of guiding principles for adoption by the General Assembly or of a convention containing binding legal obligations. Taking into account all technical and other factors there may be a need, for example, to establish the equivalent of a nuclear-free zone in near-earth orbit. The proposed working group on scientific and technical aspects of this matter would help lay the foundation for constructive and realistic discussion in the Legal Sub-Committee and in the General Assembly.

We look to other members of this Sub-Committee to join with us in an effective response to the issues raised, along the lines I have described. We welcome the views of others and we are flexible on specific proposals, while strongly committed, with other nations, to the need for a regime governing the use of nuclear power sources in outer space which will rule out the risk of any incident which could have tragic and far-reaching consequences.