

(Mr. Gonsalves, India)

The more pressing areas in which we were expected to deliver, and in regard to which not an iota of progress has been made, relate to nuclear disarmament, prevention of nuclear war, a nuclear-weapon-test ban and prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The Six Nation Initiative has placed particular emphasis on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. As has been pointed out by my delegation in the past the question of introduction of weapons into space has far-reaching implications not only for the space powers but for all nations. The introduction of defence systems in an altogether new arena will inevitably prompt retaliatory defence measures and enhanced offence capability by the other side resulting in the emergence of multiple new systems for offensive strikes against targets in space and on Earth. Thus the extension of the arms race into outer space through the pursuit of space-based defences against strategic ballistic missiles will merely precipitate an unrestrained competition in offensive and defensive weapons on Earth and in space which would almost certainly undermine the existing complex of arms control agreements, aggravate the risk and threat of nuclear war and result in an unacceptable misuse of scientific, technological and economic resources. The shifting objectives of the proponents of strategic defence are presently related to enhancing the existing nuclear deterrent by heightening the uncertainty element in the adversary's calculations through the introduction of space-based ABM systems rather than to rendering nuclear weapons obsolete as was earlier claimed. The uncertainty element is not new and was very similarly articulated in the debate about ABMs in the sixties. The ABM Treaty of 1972 reflected the recognition that emergence of defences against nuclear-armed ballistic missiles would inevitably produce a spiralling offence-defence arms race which would be exceedingly destabilizing and afford protection to neither side. There can be no doubt, therefore, that graduation to ABM systems on an inevitably competitive and escalating scale would bring the world that much closer to the brink of nuclear catastrophe. Surely the answer would lie in negotiating agreements to eliminate nuclear weapons on Earth rather than to venture into the hazardous area of space weapons. Fortunately the space weapon systems in question have not yet been fully developed and deployed and we still have time to take firm preventive action.

Our basic concerns relate to the dedicated and planned development of two specific categories of weapon systems in space, namely, ABM and ASAT systems.