

(Mr. Beesley, Canada)

I would like to clarify a point I made in an earlier statement when I referred to the régime of the high seas by way of analogy to the régime of outer space. The Canadian working paper tabled at that time did the same. I wish to stress that I did not refer to the law of the sea as a model, but by way of a law-making analogy. I wish to emphasize this point without developing it further, so as to avoid any misunderstanding concerning the Canadian position.

Given the complexity of many of the questions we have discussed under the existing outer space mandate, the Canadian Government considers that the best way to expedite our work is to put forth our views in the form of working papers. The purpose is to concretize discussions and negotiations, whether or not delegations agree with the papers tabled. Even disagreement clarifies issues, far more than general statements not focused on specific proposals. In my statement to the Conference on 2 April I cited the series of working papers that Canada has put forward, and I do not need to do so again. I would however like to refer to our workshop in Montreal in May of this year, which I had the honour to chair, as another instance of our effort to make concrete contributions in this field. I wish to thank the many delegations which have expressed their appreciation for this workshop. The Canadian PAXSAT presentation to the Ad hoc Committee represented a further effort to concentrate on the practical problems of verification.

With regard to the specific question of verification concerning outer space, I think that it is worth reiterating the point I made to the Conference in my statement of 21 July. Careful negotiation, drafting and implementation of adequate and effective verification systems is essential if verification is not to become a source of tension rather than a means of lessening it or eliminating it. We are pleased to note that the Soviet Union is giving attention to this problem, as evidenced in the proposal outlined in Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's speech to the Conference on Disarmament on 6 August. We would encourage the Soviet Union to give further thought to its proposal for an international verification system. We have particularly taken note that, as seems clear from this and other elements of Mr. Shevardnadze's statement, the Soviet Union accepts in principle that useful and practical work on aspects of verification can be done independently of a specific negotiating context, and without having previously reached agreement on the details of what is to be controlled. This is a view which has long been advocated by Canada.

By way of clarification, I should also emphasize, however, that, as reflected in our own PAXSAT feasibility study, in our view the implementation of verification systems ought, at least in most circumstances, to be treaty-specific. Canada has not advocated third-party approaches involving verification activities outside the context of an agreement or by countries not party to an agreement. A corollary to this approach has been that Canada has not advocated the putting into place of verification systems or procedures in advance of the conclusion of an agreement. These comments are applicable, of course, not only to outer space but to nuclear test issues as well.

I would make an additional, final point about our work in relation to outer space. The working papers my delegation has submitted have pointed to the potential importance of careful drafting of definitions. The somewhat