

(Mr. Tonwe, Nigeria)

The horrendous dangers which the accumulation and refinement of nuclear weapons pose to human survival are now well known to everyone. Reputable scientists from both sides of the ideological divide have given us vivid descriptions of the intensity of destruction and human suffering which a major nuclear war would entail for the entire planet. The most favourable post-nuclear-war scenario is too disastrous to contemplate! And yet the view that nuclear weapons guarantee peace is still strongly held in some quarters. Those who hold this view also claim that the major military Powers are not likely to use the weapon against each other. The Nigerian delegation finds these arguments totally contradictory and unconvincing. In fact, we believe that it is because the major military Powers can conceive the use of nuclear weapons to gain national advantage, that they strive ever so hard to achieve military superiority over their rivals.

This research for superiority has taken the nuclear arms race to outer space and has further complicated disarmament negotiations and reduced the chances of significant nuclear disarmament measures. During the last few years, we have all heard the arguments for and against the deployment of weapons in outer space. The Nigerian delegation remains unconvinced that the decisive weapons superiority over rivals which some States have sought unsuccessfully on Earth for centuries will now be permanently had in outer space. There is every reason to believe that the vision of any such superiority in a high-tech age can only be illusive. If the protagonists of nuclear deterrence and the theories justifying the unbridled arms race are right, why, one might ask, would any State with the necessary resources deny itself that security guarantee?

Extending the nuclear-arms race to outer space is, in our view, too dangerous and too costly to be condoned. The several hundred billion dollars which the world spends on arms at present will be further increased as more and more countries intensify their development of space weapons or defensive systems. This will only lead to greater insecurity and misery for mankind and should therefore be stopped through negotiations. We hope that the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space will be set up early to seriously consider this matter.

Nothing we have said in this statement is intended to diminish the importance of space technology. Indeed, while the Nigerian delegation deplores any attempt to use outer space for military purposes, we warmly congratulate all States which have advanced and are continuing to advance the frontiers of human knowledge through space probes.