

(Mr. Turbański, Poland)

We have behind us a serious discussion in plenary meetings and three years of concrete work in the Ad hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, this year so ably guided by Ambassador Pugliese of Italy. Many issues were clarified and new ideas expressed. Undoubtedly, we have today a much clearer picture of the problem as well as a deeper understanding of avenues and difficulties connected with its resolution.

The Conference's work in this field must, however, raise concern. A substantial part of our time was devoted to the review of the existing legal régime applicable to outer space. Despite sometimes conflicting assessments of its adequacy for preventing an arms race in outer space, there seemed to be a general convergence of opinions on the need for its preservation and strengthening. This should lead first of all to bona fide implementation and interpretation of accepted obligations in both bilateral and multilateral agreements.

The reality is, however, far from these reasonable expectations. And one can hardly reconcile declarations on the importance of and attachment to existing agreements with practical steps which threaten the legal régime they establish.

This applies in particular to the bilateral Soviet-United States anti-ballistic missile Treaty of 1972. Strict adherence to this agreement is today an indispensable condition for any successful work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and its limitation on Earth. The basic philosophy behind this Treaty, namely that arsenals of offensive nuclear missiles could be successfully limited only if anti-missile systems were strictly constrained, retains validity. Nevertheless, threats to the ABM Treaty exist. They include the possibility of its abrogation or reinterpretation violating its spirit and intent.