

(Mr. Teja, India)

Closely related to this, but wider in scope in terms of its applicability to all objects launched into space, is the Registration Convention of 1975. My delegation believes that this convention needs to be strengthened, especially the provisions relating to article IV, which provide the information about the characteristics of the objects launched. Such an exercise is fully in consonance with the objectives of the Convention, as stated in the preamble, namely to "contribute to the application and development of international law governing the exploration and use of outer space". Under the existing scheme, while we know from independent reliable sources that about three fourths of the satellites launched are used for military purposes, the description most frequently provided under the requirements of the Registration Convention read "Exploration of upper atmosphere and outer space". Admittedly, the dividing line between military and non-military uses is thin, but to be able to examine it and judge it impartially, we need to be able to get close to it. My delegation would be in favour of the idea that an expert group be convened to help the Ad hoc Committee in such a task. To begin with, the mandate of the expert group would be to devise the necessary parameters on which information needs to be provided under article IV of the Registration Convention. Such an activity would not only further the objectives emphasized in the preamble, but also be a significant aid to confidence-building.

A better understanding of this aspect would contribute to our discussion on the proposal for a multilateral agreement conferring on space objects immunity from attack or interference. Clearly, such an agreement would need suitable verification, on which, too, proposals have been submitted to this Conference.

We have the means to begin to consider specific provisions and measures aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. It is the earnest desire of the delegation of India that, with the wholehearted commitment and co-operation of all other delegations, the Conference on Disarmament will be successful in safeguarding outer space, as the common heritage of mankind, for the generations to come.