

(Mr. Alessi, Italy)

The prospects of bilateral talks on space issues should reverberate positively on the Conference on Disarmament. In the contrary case, a continuing deadlock on item 5 of our agenda would constitute an ever more striking and unjustifiable contrast.

In addressing this Conference on 10 July, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, stated: "I regard the bilateral process aimed at achieving disarmament as complementary to the main process at the multilateral level. It is therefore important that the efforts of this Conference should be maintained and increased".

We share this view: bilateral and multilateral consideration of these issues should complement each other.

It is reasonable and indeed necessary that the United States and the Soviet Union discuss bilaterally weaponry that only they possess. This obviously should not obscure the magnitude of the interest that all States have in the solution of these problems. Space technology is within the reach of a growing number of countries; an even larger number of countries will benefit, for their own progress, from the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. The international community is anxious and watchful. We have no alternative but to intensify our efforts.

I do not wish to raise today matters of procedure. I am confident that with your recognized ability and experience, Mr. President, you will bring to a positive conclusion the two years of discussions on the creation of a subsidiary body on item 5. The Conference cannot afford to fail again.

I would like to use this plenary session to continue our discussion on substance: in March 1982, my delegation put forward a number of considerations on issues relating to a ban on ASAT systems; we tried to develop such considerations on 21 July 1983; on 27 March 1984 we aired further thoughts against the background of existing international legal instruments and the need to review and assess their implications. The main thrust of those statements was to focus attention on the question of ensuring the immunity of satellites, by prohibiting attacks or activities directed against them.

Those statements provide the necessary terms of reference for today's statement which is devoted to some collateral measures. On the basis of our previous discussions I would venture to say that four main threats in and from outer space could be identified:

- (a) physical attack with conventional or nuclear explosives;
- (b) collision or physical tampering with manoeuvred spacecraft; hypervelocity projectiles;
- (c) directed-energy weapons, in particular lasers;
- (d) interference with electromagnetic communication systems in space.

There are in addition technologies and systems designed for purposes other than ASAT, which can give rise to capabilities inherently useful for ASAT purposes.

Discriminating among such systems and technologies, identifying which ones can be constrained or prohibited, and working out reliable procedures for verification, constitute formidable tasks.