

(Mr. Carlos Miranda y Elio, Spain)

I should now like to devote a brief comment to agenda item 5, the prevention of the arms race in outer space. In an agreement recently approved by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Spanish Parliament, it is declared that Spain advocates disarmament measures which, while preserving the necessary levels of security and stability, will reverse the arms race on Earth and prevent its extension into outer space. I am not going to discuss the question whether there are armaments deployed in outer space or not, but we do believe that there is no doubt that outer space is already being used for military purposes. In many cases, this utilization, even though it is military, has stabilizing, and hence advantageous consequences. However, we are also convinced that the legal rules applicable in outer space are inadequate to guarantee that space weapons will not be installed there.

My Government has grave doubts that new systems of weapons, whether space- or Earth-based, that are designed to destroy space objects can contribute to creating greater stability or security. Much the opposite, we believe that such systems of armaments would inevitably initiate a new race, this time in space, with the consequential weakening of strategic stability. This, of course, a question where the main responsibility devolves on the two major military Powers. Spain has already expressed in other fora, and I reiterate it here, its support for the view that these two countries should comply with the ABM Treaty in the terms in which it has been interpreted so far, and that any other interpretation must be agreed by the contracting parties and be without detriment to strategic stability and security. Consequently, we are in principle opposed to any deployment of strategic defences, be they based in space or on Earth, without an agreement in this connection and without taking account of European interests.

Given the inadequacy of the existing legal order, which only specifically prohibits the deployment in space or on celestial bodies of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction, we are concerned first and foremost about the development of anti-satellite weapons and we are pleased that the United States Congress has not authorized testing of this type of weapon against real targets, and that Soviet testing in this regard has ceased. In this situation, we think that an agreement should be possible and that it is necessary to study the possible machinery for the verification of compliance with that agreement, a subject of whose difficulties we are not unaware.

We are pleased that an Ad hoc Committee has been re-established which is to complete the consideration of the diverse and difficult problems linked to the necessity of preventing an arms race in outer space. Likewise, we are pleased at the resumption of work on agenda item 6 and we have taken note with great interest of document CD/768 submitted by the distinguished delegation of Nigeria, which we believe offers an excellent basis for the discussion of the assurances that States not possessing nuclear weapons ought to obtain against the use or the threat of use of these weapons.