

(Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, Egypt)

The extension of the arms race to outer space represents a new source of anxiety for all mankind. If the world has welcomed the peaceful conquest of space, there is no doubt that today it is profoundly alarmed at the increasing trend — especially on the part of the countries which possess the largest technological capabilities — towards an arms race in outer space and the development of new weapons systems. Whereas stars and planets were sources of poetic inspiration in the past, today they have become a theatre for military rivalry and are about to fall hostage to evil and destructive drives.

Egypt, which has for long done its utmost to draw attention to the necessity of securing outer space against non-peaceful uses, hopes that you will expeditiously initiate negotiations with a view to conclude an agreement or agreements — as appropriate — to prevent an arms race in all its aspects in outer space.

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(Mr. Carasales, Argentina)

I cannot conclude this statement without saying a few words about events which occurred in recent days and brought the possibility of negotiations on the military use of outer space closer to hand.

Although the final outcome of this initiative is as yet unknown, my delegation cannot but welcome it, as it would welcome any step which might lead us to a less dangerous and more stable world.

However, my delegation must also raise some questions relating to the process already under way on this subject at the multilateral level. It must be asked what the impact of this attempt to take the issue to the bilateral level will be on the multilateral effort, and even to what extent they are compatible. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is a matter of particular concern to the United Nations, as is reflected in the many resolutions adopted on the subject by the General Assembly, which it is unnecessary to recall. Furthermore, the United Nations has "a central role and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament", as stated in the Final Document (paragraph 114).

The single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament, included a specific item relating to this issue in its agenda in 1982. It has repeatedly been argued — and recently, with particular emphasis, at the last meeting of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space — that the sole competent forum for dealing with the prevention of an arms race in space is the Conference on Disarmament.

Over the last two years, intensive efforts have been made to set in motion within the Conference suitable machinery for undertaking the substantive consideration of this problem, with the results which we all know. At the same time, many countries have repeatedly expressed their interest in this issue which affects all States to a greater or lesser extent. On 12 June 1984, the representative of France clearly summed up the situation when he said that the recent developments in this field "have direct implications for France, for her security and for that of Europe. It would also affect the balance of East-West relations and international security. It is therefore of relevance to the entire international community, if only because of its impact upon the prospects for co-operation and developing the peaceful uses of outer space".