

(Ms. Theorin, Sweden)

It is, however, obvious that meaningful agreements on the prevention of an arms race in space cannot be reached only on a bilateral level. An ASAT ban not adhered to by all States with a future ASAT capacity would make many important satellites potential objects of attacks. It would also leave the satellites of the Soviet Union and the United States themselves vulnerable to attacks by ASAT weapons of a third State. A multilateral approach to ASAT weapons would thus be in the interest also of the two major space Powers.

It is important to elaborate a legally binding international instrument or instruments prohibiting ASAT weapons and ASAT warfare. Because all States are directly or indirectly involved, the Conference on Disarmament must immediately consider in what way it can take action to this effect.

Both the Soviet Union and the United States now in fact observe a moratorium on ASAT testing. This is a most welcome development, which should facilitate the negotiations of a multilateral comprehensive ban on ASAT systems.

Much attention has been given to the question of ballistic missile defences. The Swedish Government does not believe that security can be achieved through such defences. BMD systems in outer space -- if technically feasible -- might be vulnerable to attack and could be overcome by an increase in the number of nuclear weapons. It is difficult to see how destabilization and an increase in the risk of nuclear war could be avoided in the process to establish technically advanced BMD systems. The arguments that led to the conclusion of the ABM Treaty are still valid. This Treaty remains one of the most important achievements in the field of arms limitation. It is essential that the ABM Treaty be maintained, that its provisions be strictly observed and that measures be taken to prevent its erosion.

The possible development of ballistic missile defence systems is a concern not only for the Soviet Union and the United States. Because of its implications we, the non-nuclear weapon States, like all other possible victims of nuclear war, have the right to expect from the bilateral negotiations concrete measures which will decrease the risk of nuclear war, enhance stability and, thus, the security of all of us.

Let me, in this context, underline that there are also multilateral treaties which contain obligations of relevance to the question of advanced BMD systems. Even if this insufficient, multilateral legal framework does not explicitly prohibit weapons in orbit around the Earth -- or on Earth, in the atmosphere, at sea or below -- Sweden thinks that their development, testing and deployment would run counter to the spirit of the Outer Space Treaty. Its article I states that the use of outer space "shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries". Article III states that the Parties to the Treaty shall use outer space "in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international co-operation and understanding". It is indeed difficult to reconcile these intentions with activities aimed at developing weapons for use in space.

One of the technologies considered for space-based BMD systems is the X-ray laser. X-ray lasers require pumping by very intense radiation which, in practice, has to come from a nuclear explosion. The testing of X-ray lasers in outer space, if involving nuclear explosions, would be a breach of the prohibition of such explosions in article I of the Partial Test Ban Treaty. Already the placing of such X-ray technology in orbit around the Earth would be a violation of article IV of the Outer Space Treaty.