

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

In this respect, I would like to address briefly verification proposals regarding the possibility that surveillance and monitoring functions of satellites should be entrusted to an international agency.

Australia supports the concept of international means of verification as an extension of the principles that the issue of global stability are the legitimate business of every nation, and that together with the right to be heard on these issues comes the obligation to play a full role in making possible a more stable and secure world with a minimum level of armaments.

We also believe that national technical means will need to be supplemented by new measures, and that they will need to be protected for the indefinite future.

We therefore see an international satellite monitoring agency as a positive contribution to existing arms control efforts in terms of its verification, confidence-building and transparency objectives.

Such an agency might also help to provide for a system which could verify that the threshold between permissible and non-permissible military uses of space, once identified and agreed upon, is not crossed.

But considerably more work needs to be done in defining the scope and application of the proposal -- technological feasibility and cost being two major factors.

The concept of an international satellite monitoring agency is yet another area where this Conference clearly has the resources to make its own contribution towards seeking the most effective ways and means of meeting the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space.

The effectiveness and viability of the existing and future legal régime pertaining to outer space ultimately depends on two factors -- participation in and compliance with such a régime, and the ability of States parties to verify that the agreements are being complied with. This involves both a political decision as well as adequate technological means to support that decision. That decision will be based on a cost-benefit analysis of whether an agreement is cost- and security-effective, and whether it will deter non-compliance.

Accordingly, this Conference must continue to seek to demonstrate in a scientific and rigorous way on what basis we might need additional multilateral agreements to regulate activities in outer space, and how this might practically and realistically be achieved.