

(Mr. Tellalov, Bulgaria)

The consideration of the legal regime regulating activities in outer space has underlined again the importance of preserving and strengthening the existing legal restraints. There are some loopholes, however, which, if not properly addressed, could lead to the introduction of a new class of weapons -- space strike weapons. The outer space agreements in force do not preclude, for instance, the development, testing and deployment of non-nuclear ASAT weapon systems, which, incidentally, are based on technologies suitable for ABM purposes as well. A number of proposals have been put forward by delegations from various groups with a view to filling up these gaps. It is our belief that all delegations will have to consider seriously these valuable proposals. References to the ongoing bilateral negotiations could not solve a problem which has important multilateral dimensions. May I, also, recall that our agreed goal is the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which substantially differs from the idea of regulating such a race, as advocated by few delegations.

We have welcomed the efforts of a number of delegations to clarify the basic object of possible agreements in this area -- the concept of space weapons. Definitions of space strike weapons or space weapons, have been proposed by the delegations of Venezuela, Sri Lanka, the Soviet Union, China, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary and my own country. The analysis made during the proceedings of the Ad hoc Committee has revealed the existence of a very wide area of common ground among them. All suggested formulations have many common elements and cover all basic categories of space strike weapons. This is a fact which the Conference should, perhaps, further explore in its future work on the subject. Thus the work of the Ad hoc Committee on item 5 has recently acquired some negotiating features. In such circumstances it seems that the exploratory mandate of the Committee this year, has exhausted itself and even posed some artificial restraints on the substantive work on this item. The next logical and natural step should be, therefore, to set up next year an Ad hoc Committee with a mandate which permits to start negotiations aimed, directly, at the prevention of an arms race in outer space.