

(Mr. Dubey, India)

All the conditions for starting serious negotiations on this subject are present. There are first of all the grave implications of the recent developments staring at our face. These developments have taken place in spite of and by means of a transgression of the existing legal regimes. Nothing short of a new regime will do in these circumstances.

There is also a draft treaty submitted by the USSR on the subject. Practically every delegation which has commented on this draft treaty has drawn our attention to its positive features and the tremendous improvement that it represents over the proposals submitted by the USSR on the same subject in 1981. Its provisions for banning not only the deployment of space-based weapons but also their testing and development, banning new anti-satellite systems and the elimination of the existing ones, and for verification are its particularly welcome features. Some questions have been asked about the adequacy of its provisions on verification. We have, here, the assurance of the leader of the USSR delegation that these provisions are negotiable with a view to being elaborated and improved upon. Draft legal instruments are not supposed to be only generally commented upon in the plenary statements in this Conference; the whole purpose of submitting them is to take them up as a basis for serious negotiation.

Since the dawning of the space era, we have had occasions to exult in successive human achievements in the conquest of outer space. In this we have shared with the nationals of the countries concerned, their excitement at each successful mission of the United States Space Shuttles, the USSR's Salyut and Soyuz, and the European Space Agency's Ariane, as though these were our own achievements. Very recently, our whole nation became, through the television network, an active participant in the glory of the achievements in outer space of two Soviet cosmonauts and the first Indian cosmonaut, Rakesh Sharma.

We, therefore, shudder even to think about, let alone accept the fact of, these great adventures of the human spirit being turned to use for destructive purposes, having the potentiality of triggering a nuclear holocaust. We urge with all the force and conviction at our command that we must arrest this trend and prevent the development of these space weapons. We must without further delay commence negotiations for elaborating a new instrument, or instruments, the need for which is established beyond any shred of doubt. Space technology fortunately does not as yet carry the stigma of a Hiroshima, and the world still cherishes Yuri Gagarin's first space exploration and Neil Armstrong's great leap for mankind. By arresting the militarization of outer space and preventing the arms race there, not only will we be able to pull the human race at least a few inches away from the brink of disaster, but also we will contribute to disarmament and to Man's continued exploration of the peaceful potentialities of outer space.