

(Mr. Erdembileg, Mongolia)

We are all fairly familiar with the fact that outer space is not always and everywhere a peaceful sphere and frequently shows signs of becoming a new arena for the arms race. This is illustrated by the alarming reports in the world's press which have become more frequent of late. I am referring in particular to the numerous projects for the production of a whole range of space weapons designed for the launching of attacks on objects in space, in the atmosphere and on the earth's surface.

There are particularly far-reaching plans in connection with the possible military uses of the reusable space vehicles being constructed in the United States under the "shuttle" programme. According to press reports the Pentagon specialists are considering plans for the establishment of military bases in space with the help of these vehicles, the location in space of mines for attacks on the artificial earth satellites of an opponent and the creation of large-scale systems of space-based anti-missile defence. The possibilities are being examined of the use of space shuttles as vehicles for various types of weapons. Other very important plans for the militarization of outer space are connected with their use. Major-General J. Welch, deputy head of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff for research and development said recently: "Our activities continue to expand at a substantial rate and the shuttle with its potential for the delivery of heavier and more sophisticated payloads plays the part of catalyst in this."

The distinguishing feature of the new plans is the fact that the space shuttle is to play the role of the basic element in them without which the systems to be established cannot function. These systems include, for example, large platforms with laser weapons and also small-sized air and space vehicles for the carrying out of short-term operations in outer space and in the atmosphere.

One of the largest programmes to which the Pentagon is at present attaching primary importance is the programme for the development of laser weapons. Their purpose is to be the destruction of any objects, on earth, at sea, in the air and in outer space. Work on the construction of the basic element of this weapon is being carried out within the framework of the so-called triad of space-based laser weapons which, in the view of the periodical Foreign Policy, may soon bring a combat system for space into being. It is planned to test the elements of the triad in space in 1984-1985.

The American press has also published reports about the construction in the United States of anti-satellite systems based on small-sized interceptors. It is to reach its target with the help of a small missile launched from an F-15 fighter aircraft. According to the plans, flight tests of the mini-interceptor in space will begin during the first half of 1983 and it will be supplied to the armed forces in the mid-1980s.

But the United States is not merely developing space weapons; it is also creating the necessary conditions for their use. It is known that from 1 September of this year the area of space surrounding the earth will for the Pentagon become a new potential theatre of military operations. From then on,