

These delegations believed that the establishment of an international space monitoring agency (ISMA), which might in future become a component of an international verification agency, could provide international community with authentic and diverse information on compliance with multilateral treaties and agreements in the area of disarmament and reducing international tensions as well as monitoring military situation in regions of conflict. Seeking to provide this idea with a practical basis delegations of Socialist States proposed to start negotiations on the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of an international satellite monitoring agency, including the programme and material and technical basis for it.

43. Some delegations maintained that issues relating to verification and compliance needed to be considered in greater depth. They noted that many elements of the existing legal régime applicable to outer space were relatively simple and stated that the more complicated any arms control agreement for outer space was, the more difficult it would be to verify compliance with it. They believed that verification and compliance issues were particularly sensitive and complex in this area because, on the one hand, vital national security interests were at stake and, on the other hand, the vastness of space and the possibilities of concealment on Earth posed special problems. With respect to the proposal for the establishment of a world space organization, some delegations were of the opinion that its consideration was beyond the competence of the Conference on Disarmament. They also foresaw substantial legal, technical, political and organizational difficulties associated with an international verification inspectorate. In this regard, they believed that it should be kept in mind that virtually any space object, if controlled and manipulated properly, is capable of serving as a weapon. They stated that this basic fact plus many legal, technical, definitional, organizational and political obstacles bar the way to a successful international verification inspectorate.

44. One delegation stated that any type of international verification inspectorate is impractical because treaties already in place adequately regulate military activities in space, while also permitting the conduct of important national security and self-defence activities such as early warning of attack. It noted that the ABM Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty, and the Registration Convention constituted significant elements of this Treaty régime. This delegation believed, moreover, that proposals of this type could be more destabilizing than stabilizing because they could circumvent the development or compromise the effectiveness of strategic defence capabilities that threaten no one. It noted the possibility that greater reliance on effective defences against ballistic missiles could, in the future, provide a safer, more stable basis for deterrence of war than the sole reliance on the threat of nuclear retaliation. This delegation stated that to provide a fully effective layered defence, some elements of a ballistic missile defence system may need to be based in space. This delegation stated that the programme of research, development and testing related to this layered defence system is in full compliance with the 1972 ABM Treaty.

45. Commenting on the issue, another delegation stated that Article V (1) of the ABM Treaty explicitly prohibits the development, testing or deployment of ABM systems, which are, inter alia, space-based or include space-based elements. The same delegation emphasized that its State had been observing fully and precisely the ABM Treaty.