

66. Further developing its proposal put forward at SSOD.III in 1988 one delegation expounded in a working paper (CD/OS/WP.39) its views on the creation of an international agency for space monitoring (ISMA). This delegation specified the eventual tasks, functions, possible structure and basic principles of ISMA, as well as requirements to future space monitoring systems of such an international body which would provide the international community with information on compliance with multilateral disarmament agreements and reduction of international tension, as well as carry out monitoring of the military situation in the areas of conflict. Along with military and political aspects, ISMA's activities could also have an economic effect in terms of supplying the interested States with satellite data for the benefit of their economic development. Having presented details of the step-by-step approach to the creation of ISMA, this delegation consented to the idea that an agency for the processing and interpretation of space images would be created at the first stage of such a process.

67. One delegation introduced a working paper (CD/945-CD/OS/WP.40) giving details of the proposal for an agency for the processing and interpretation of space images which it had presented to the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1988. According to that proposal, such an agency would appear as the first phase of an International Satellite Monitoring Agency as proposed in 1978; it would serve to collect, process, interpret and distribute remote sensing data received from existing satellites, for the benefit of the international community, including the verification of disarmament agreements; it would also train photographic interpretation experts and conduct studies and research.

68. 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 and unwieldy 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, the vastness of space and the possibilities of concealment on Earth posed special problems.

69. Some delegations stated that verification of agreements not yet in existence, whose terms could not be anticipated, between parties still