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The international community has unanimously recognized outer space as the common preserve of mankind. To expand international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space, it is essential that it be kept free of all types of weapons. During the last few years, the CD has done valuable work in examining and identifying issues relevant to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is an encouraging sign to note that almost 20 proposals have been tabled by delegations, some relating to specific aspects such as banning ASAT weapons or providing immunity to satellites, as well as other more comprehensive proposals, such as amending the 1967 outer space Treaty or adding a protocol to it or replacing it with a more comprehensive treaty.

It is accepted that the existing legal régime relating to outer space needs to be strengthened and reinforced. In view of technological developments taking place, its limitations have become strikingly evident. New legal instruments need to be developed which would reflect both the new political reality and these technological developments. The existing corpus of international law, in the form of both bilateral and multilateral agreements, indicates the direction in which we have to move.

Verification of compliance is a difficult task, and one often made more complex by lack of pertinent data. Today, the registration Convention cannot be described as an effective source of pertinent data. It needs to be strengthened. It would be useful to have an expert group associated with the Ad hoc Committee which could, as a first task, work on the development of criteria necessary for building up a relevant data base.

Satellite technology has reached a stage where it can be used as an important aid in economic planning and development. Communications, remote sensing, navigation and meteorology are among the fields where developing countries could greatly benefit from the use of satellite technology. We therefore view with great concern the development of anti-satellite weapons systems. Priority must be accorded to a ban on the development of anti-satellite weapons, coupled with the dismantling of the existing systems. It is an encouraging sign, though, that in the two States with the most significant space capabilities, restraint with regard to anti-satellite weapon development is currently being observed. What is needed now are multilateral negotiations to convert this voluntary restraint into a universally binding commitment. The proposal for an expert group would also help in resolving the definitional problems so relevant in considering an ASAT ban. We are also concerned about the ongoing research on new types of anti-ballistic-missile weapons systems. The limits prescribed by the ABM Treaty should not be

transgressed, and negotiations should begin on a new legal instrument to ensure that outer space is kept free from the incursion of new weapon systems operated either from ground or from space. It is a matter of regret that the Ad hoc Committee functioning since 1985 has not succeeded in coming to grips with the real issues under this item.