

(Mr. Tellalov, Bulgaria)

The question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space occupies an important place in our work. The growing attention devoted to this issue is fully understandable, since the point at issue is to nip in the bud a new and particularly dangerous round of the arms race, namely, its being carried into outer space, whose development and exploitation is one of mankind's greatest achievements in this century.

International agreements in force limit the use of outer space for military purposes only to a certain degree; they do not preclude the possibility of the deployment in outer space of types of weapons which do not fall within the definition of "means of mass destruction". There is need for a mechanism in international law reliable enough to thwart the designs of the proponents of an arms race in that sphere.

We share the concern of other delegations in connection with the elaboration in the United States of programmes for the development of space weapons to destroy objects in outer space, in the atmosphere and on the surface of the Earth and for the deployment in outer space of anti-ballistic missile systems based on the utilization of the latest scientific achievements in the field of laser and particle-beam technology. The implementation of these programmes would represent a gross violation of the Soviet-United States treaty on the limitation of anti-ballistic missile systems signed in 1972.

At the beginning of this year, the new ASAT anti-ballistic missile system launched from F-15 fighters was tested in the United States of America. The development of a weapon of this kind carries a direct threat to the use of early-warning satellites and increases the danger of nuclear war.

The United States' openly stated unwillingness to engage in negotiations on questions related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space is also significant.

Such actions by the United States Government are having an effect on the work of our Conference. Problems of outer space have appeared on our agenda for almost three years. However, through the fault of the United States of America, consideration of and consultations on this question have not yet led to the establishment of a subsidiary body which might, in a serious and responsible way, devote itself to the elaboration of a comprehensive international agreement or agreements on the prohibition of an arms race in outer space. I subscribe to the view expressed by the distinguished representative of Mexico, Ambassador Alfonso García Robles, that we cannot treat the issue as if nothing had happened. The vote on resolution 38/70 at the latest session of the United Nations General Assembly convincingly confirms the international community's steadily growing concern in connection with the danger of outer space being transformed into an arena of the arms race. At the Conference on Disarmament there are enough ideas and proposals on this urgent issue -- all that is needed is to create the necessary preconditions in order to embark on specific negotiations within the framework of an appropriate ad hoc committee, which should be given a mandate of full value.