

(Mr. Velayati, Islamic Republic of Iran)

A crucial point which has generated numerous debates and arguments is the recent initiatives to intensify the arms race in outer space. While backing and supporting the international measures and the attention paid by the members of this Conference to prevent such an adventurist move, we believe that there is a need for a more comprehensive and encompassing action. Outer space is the "common heritage of mankind" and should be used in a peaceful manner for all nations and not merely the developed ones. It has unfortunately turned into a militarized zone by a few countries, and both super-Powers, along with the countries having the technology, have saturated space with military and spy satellites. More than 90 per cent of satellites today have military purposes. The notion that the world military Powers have to acquire constant information in order to maintain mutual confidence in East-West military relations might be a justification for the presence of spy satellites, but the sphere of action of these satellites is not confined to the two blocks -- rather it brings all countries under their intelligence reconnaissance. This puts the countries independent from the two blocs in a difficult situation and removes their intelligence security, particularly as such information will be totally at the disposal of the owners of satellites and may in turn be used for political blackmail against other countries. At the moment, the Iraqi régime is benefitting from data provided by American satellites during the war of aggression launched against Iran by Iraq. This matter, which is well known, is in fact a complicity in the war while no international measure has been adopted to counter such an intervention.

This matter is noteworthy in other aspects too. The satellite can now take and process pictures as small as a few square centimetres, thanks to the progress and advancement of technology. This possibility which is at the unique disposal of a few countries, without any limitation or control, is a flagrant violation of the rights of nations to privacy. No military or civilian object is immune from the satellites' view and this is an important subject for human rights. Although the United Nations reports found the formation of an "International Satellite Monitoring Agency" difficult at the present juncture, attaining this goal is a must, and talks on this issue and studying practical and possible ways are necessary. The exact registration of satellites and their purposes is a step to this end. We believe that the arrest of the arms race in outer space is indispensable, regardless of developments on Earth. The nations can not wait for the super-Powers to reach an agreement on Earth and then talk about space -- which will be completely and irreversibly contaminated by that time. The countries having space technology should, while abiding by the existing "Outer Space Treaty" refrain from tests and the deployment of destructive weapons in space, and whatever is contrary to the peaceful use of space in the framework of a convention. The right to the peaceful use of outer space should be provided to all nations.

In addition, an initiative to annihilate the military satellites would have a destructive effect on telecommunication and non-military ones. Safeguarding the world system of telecommunications, including the satellites and ground stations, is an international obligation and any threat to it should be prevented. Apart from the disrespect shown by the Iraqi régime for all international values in repeatedly attacking our ground stations, other countries are fully aware of the significance attached to this point.