

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

It is also true that existing and future uses of outer space have and will have a profound impact on the security of all States.

The crucial issue that needs to be addressed by the international community if it wishes to prevent an arms race in outer space is the need to monitor the military uses of space, and in particular the issues of whether the space Powers can agree not to use space for purposes that others consider would require a response, defensive or otherwise, and whether compliance with a non-arms-race régime can be verified effectively.

Regarding the first question, this is a matter currently under negotiation between the two major space Powers, and is of course inextricably linked with efforts to halt and reverse the arms race on Earth. However, it is also relevant to the activities of other space-using States. In seeking to determine whether the international community needs to devise additional legal instruments in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, a thorough understanding of what the existing legal régime covers is a fundamental prerequisite.

It is our view -- and we believe that it is also the view of the majority of delegations here -- that the existing legal régime is not a foolproof guarantee to prevent an arms race in space. The application to space of general international legal norms, including the provisions of the United Nations Charter, as for example reference to the right of self-defence, does not necessarily reduce or significantly diminish the prospects of an arms race in outer space.

Preventing an arms race in space involves, in our view, preventing the development and deployment of arms against space assets, not just the prevention of the use of force in space. For example, the existing legal régime offers very little in the way of specific protection for satellites. The variety of views which there is on the meaning of such terms as "peaceful uses", "militarization" and "stabilizing" introduces a wide area of uncertainty and ambiguity into attempts to establish what are permitted or prohibited uses of space, and into attempts to define which satellites should be protected.

The question of whether compliance with a non-arms régime can be verified effectively is, of course, of fundamental relevance to our work. It is true that with ever-increasing technological sophistication, verification of what functions space objects are capable of performing becomes increasingly difficult. But we must not forget that sophisticated technologies are also helpful in devising increasingly sophisticated techniques of verification.

This Conference can and should make a contribution in the area of verification, not least because the technology is not limited to the major space Powers alone. This was admirably demonstrated by the workshop and the presentation given to us in the Conference on Disarmament on the PAXSAT concept by the Canadian Department of External Affairs.