

(Mr. de la Gorce, France)

like its allies — and I quote the communiqués — welcomed "the United States willingness to discuss with the Soviet Union programmes of research on strategic defence".

Whether it be with regard to the limitation of anti-satellite systems or to that of anti-missile systems, we consider that appropriate contacts between those two countries should be encouraged. The question is none the less of concern to all the countries in the world, and the Conference on Disarmament, which is representative of the entire international community, is therefore the appropriate body for its discussion.

I shall now turn to the second point: what are France's thoughts and proposals?

Firstly, the prospect of the development of new anti-ballistic missile technologies is disturbing in several respects.

Deterrence, which has played a vital role in the maintenance of peace in Europe, is based on the maintenance, in the face of an attack, of an assured strike-back capability. The various technological developments notwithstanding, it has so far been possible to maintain such a capacity.

But nowadays France, like the entire international community, is inevitably disturbed at the appearance of new technologies that might jeopardize the stability — and hence the peace — that has so far resulted from the very high degree of invulnerability of the means for nuclear second strikes and from the direct control of those means by the political authorities.

A situation in which each of the two main Powers sought to render its territory totally invulnerable, that is to evade all second strikes — without, incidentally, being at all sure of success in that respect — would be fraught with danger.

On the one hand, the mere announcement of an intention to press ahead with the development of such systems would itself constitute an incitement to the revival of the offensive arms race: each Power would seek to saturate the anti-ballistic missile systems planned by the other and to multiply its non-ballistic delivery vehicles (such as cruise missiles).

Hence, far from promoting the reduction of offensive systems, the prospect of the deployment of new defensive systems is likely to lead to contrary developments.

On the other hand, the devices in question, some of which would be automatic, might, for reasons having to do with the technologies involved, uncontrollably replace political decision-making.

The substantial research programmes in question have so far developed on each side without infringing the provisions of the existing international agreements, notably the United States-Soviet treaty on anti-ballistic missile systems that was concluded in 1972. They are nevertheless of such a kind as to create, henceforth, a momentum that would be contrary to the restoration of strategic balances at the lowest possible level.

That is why the French Government is concerned at the efforts undertaken both by the United States and by the USSR to hasten the development of these new anti-ballistic missile systems.