

(Mr. Dubey, India)

On the other hand, some experts have stated that the more sophisticated United States system is easier to verify. Another expert view is that an absolute ban, including the development of ASAT systems, would certainly pose verification problems, but such a ban is not critical. The banning of testing and deployment could really be monitored and will achieve the key objectives of preventing the further development and proliferation of these weapons.

In any event, the way military technology, including that for space-weapon systems, is developing, most of the new weapon systems are likely to become unverifiable sooner or later. According to one expert opinion, the new arms will be based on a technology that has been miniaturized to an extent which will not make them amenable to verification. To develop weapon systems which could beat verification has now become a principal challenge of the nations engaged in the arms race in the mistaken notion of seeking security by this means.

What is going to happen in that event? Will there be no arms limitation or disarmament simply because such measures cannot be verified? In the opinion of my delegation, that will only demonstrate how mistaken this absolute emphasis on verification has been and how this has been used as a pretext for not engaging in serious and genuine negotiations for halting and reversing the nuclear-arms race and now the arms race in outer space.

When we take all the implications of the recent developments into account, the conclusion is obvious, and it is that the present is the moment to act. If we can succeed in urgently negotiating an agreement or agreements, we will have prohibited the newest round of build-up of futuristic weapons which will take us to a point of no return. We should not be misled by the argument that there is no urgency because the new weapon systems are still at the phase of development and research. It is precisely at this phase that it will be feasible for us to ban this new arms race. If we miss this opportunity, these weapons will already become another frightening reality of our life and may be so integrated with the weapon systems as a whole and with the security doctrines of the powers possessing these weapons that negotiations for controlling or banning them will become as intractable and frustrating as the negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In fact, in some respects, particularly in the case of the ASAT system, it already seems to have reached that hopeless stage.

In such a situation how can we afford the luxury of a non-negotiating mandate for an ad hoc committee on this subject? How can any of us, in all honesty and sincerity, suggest that we should be content with merely identifying those space-weapon systems which could have a destabilizing effect, or the issues relevant to the prevention of an arms race in the outer space, or by analysing the lacunae in the existing international agreements having a bearing on the arms race in outer space, or adopt a progressive approach starting first with the question of the immunity of satellites and later on going to new weapon systems? The latter suggestion could have been acceptable when it was made in the early 1960s, but not now. As regards our making an analysis of the existing relevant international treaties as a point of departure, such an exercise could have been of some value a few years ago, but not today. We now know that in spite of these treaties, the new weapon systems are being developed and tested. Our first and foremost task is to reverse this trend.