

(Mr. De Gueiroz Duarte, Brazil)

In the present stage of the debate on the agenda, the supporters of the secretariat's draft have stated, as the basis for proposing the inclusion of the item on outer space, the fact that two resolutions of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly have requested that the Committee on Disarmament be seized of this question. Although the two resolutions differ slightly in their treatment of the subject, thus originating divergent views last Friday, it seems possible to arrive at a compromise on the formulation of the proposed new item. The stand of the Brazilian delegation, however, is based on other, and to our mind very fundamental, considerations. We have no quarrel with the request made by the General Assembly to this Committee, and indeed we did not object to the substance of either resolution at the time of their discussion and vote at the Assembly. Brazil has always considered that the decisions of the General Assembly must be complied with by this Committee, and that delegations represented here have an obligation to abide by such decisions. I would only like to recall that during the last session of the General Assembly, the representative of Brazil in the First Committee, Ambassador Souza e Silva, had the following to say with regard to the two draft resolutions on outer space, tabled respectively by some socialist and by some western delegations: "Brazil, together with other Member States, has advocated for many years now the need for prompt action in assuring the demilitarization of outer space. It is high time for responsible multilateral efforts to ensure that outer space is preserved for peaceful uses alone". In the same statement, Ambassador Souza e Silva discussed the request to the Committee on Disarmament to take up the question with the following words: "We would only argue that the Committee on Disarmament is currently seized with six substantive questions on its annual agenda, including two subjects to which the General Assembly has repeatedly assigned the highest priority: the nuclear test ban and the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". The Brazilian delegation to the First Committee even considered proposing amendments to the two draft resolutions suggesting that the question of outer space be entrusted to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, rather than to the Committee on Disarmament. In our exploratory contacts on the idea of such an amendment we met with sympathy from the group of sponsors of one resolution, but with resolute objection from the group of sponsors of the other. We finally decided not to move any amendment, and voted in favour of both resolutions with an explanation of vote that set forth our thoughts about the best available forum to ensure effective and speedy negotiation on the substance of this issue.