

(Mr. García Robles, Mexico)

"We reiterate our demand that an arms race in outer space be prevented. Space belongs to humanity, and as participants in this common heritage of mankind, we object to the outer space of our Earth being misused for destructive purposes".

Although, in addition to the resolution that was approved, three other draft resolutions were submitted in the First Committee on this item -- one sponsored by China, the second by a group of Western States and the third by a group of socialist States -- no decision was taken on them at the request of their respective sponsors. Then there was the draft resolution sponsored by many members of the so-called Group of 21 among whom, as in the previous year, the representatives of Sri Lanka and Egypt played a particularly important role in its elaboration and in the usual round of consultations; after the original text had been amended by its sponsors this draft resolution was adopted in plenary by the General Assembly on 3 December by a vote which can certainly be described as one of the most impressive of the session, namely, 154 votes in favour, none against and only 1 abstention -- that of the United States.

That resolution, namely, resolution 41/53, like that of the previous year, is very long and as usual consists of a preamble and an operative part. In the preamble, the General Assembly, after recognizing the common interest of all mankind in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, reaffirms the commitments assumed by the States parties to the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular their undertaking not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, install such weapons on celestial bodies or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner.

In the preamble the General Assembly also reaffirmed paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament, in which it is stated that, in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, further measures should be taken and "appropriate international negotiations held in accordance with the spirit of the Treaty".

In the operative part of the resolution I am discussing, it is worthwhile highlighting the following two appeals: the first is contained in paragraph 4 and addressed to all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, "to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and to take immediate measures to prevent an arms race in outer space" in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international co-operation and understanding.

The second appeal is contained in paragraph 9 and is addressed to the United States and the Soviet Union, which are urged to pursue intensively their bilateral negotiations in a constructive spirit aimed at reaching early agreement for preventing an arms race in outer space, and to advise the Conference on Disarmament periodically of the progress of their bilateral sessions so as to facilitate its work.