

(Mr. Alfarargy, Egypt)

Since mankind succeeded in reaching outer space, international efforts have tried to establish appropriate international treaties and measures to secure the use of outer space for peaceful purposes and to keep it aloof from militarization and the arms race. Although it was possible to achieve a number of treaties for that purpose -- such as the Partial Test Ban of 1963, and the Treaty on Outer Space of 1967 -- these remained, as a whole, insufficient to establish the integrated international legal system we are striving to achieve. The Final Document drew attention to such gaps when it called for taking further measures and for appropriate international negotiations to be held in accordance with the spirit of the Treaty on Outer Space, in order to prevent an arms race in outer space. The successive resolutions of the General Assembly, the last of which was 40/87, reaffirmed this notion when they stressed the primary role the Conference on Disarmament should play in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

This subject has acquired increasing importance with the declaration by the United States of its Strategic Defence Initiative, which is based on establishing a defensive anti-ballistic missiles system in outer space.

It is an initiative considered by the majority of States as a serious escalation of the arms race, and an introduction of completely new dimensions to such a race, with all the ominous political, economic and military implications.

At its last session, the Conference succeeded in establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space. It is true that only a limited number of meetings was held to consider substantive aspects, but it was sufficient to show the gaps in the existing conventions and the necessity of remedial action. That is why we hope the Ad Hoc Committee will start its work at the beginning of the current session to fill those gaps through the objective consideration of the subject in a way commensurate with the seriousness of the situation we are facing and the dangers surrounding all of us, whether we are space or non-space States.