

(Mr. Teja, India)

I would now like to turn to item 5 of our agenda -- "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" -- which has been under discussion in the Ad hoc Committee for three consecutive years. Despite the efforts of many delegations to move closer to concrete achievements, this year's proceedings in the Ad hoc Committee leave us with a sense of déjà vu. It might well be an indication of an apparently exhausted and all too inadequate mandate. What we now need is a more concrete and purpose-oriented mandate, which can enable structured work on the numerous proposals before the Conference.

The subject of an ASAT ban is one such proposal on which a considerable convergence of views is in evidence. The time is ripe to translate this convergence into concerted action. Since ASAT weapons are the existing space weapons, to begin with work on prohibition of ASAT weapons would reflect a sense of pragmatism and also open the path to the prohibition of other space weapons, including those based on new technologies. In our opinion, the political climate too could not be more opportune, as both the leading space Powers are currently observing a moratorium on the testing and deployment of such weapons.

A number of proposals of a substantive nature have been submitted. Reference can be made to CD/777 submitted by the German Democratic Republic and Mongolia, which contains basic provisions of a treaty text. Strengthening of the Registration Convention, declarations of non-deployment of weapons in space, amendment of article 4 of the outer space Treaty, are all possibilities containing merit and deserving serious consideration. Such work will also raise technical issues on which the CD would benefit from inputs from space technologists. Beginning with the ASAT weapons ban, such inputs from a group of experts would help in developing a shared perception of other elements of relevance to our work. As I indicated in my statement of 21 July 1987, the first such exercise could relate to the development of criteria pursuant to the 1975 Registration Convention in order to examine the possibility of making a distinction between military and non-military space satellites. Undoubtedly, the issues of verification and definitions of ASAT will require a considerable amount of work, but this should not prevent us from giving the Ad hoc Committee an adequate mandate within which such work can be undertaken.