

(The President)

acquainted in informal session, with the relevant documentation which remains before it and with the terms of relevant decisions or conclusions by the Conference as contained in the report of the Conference to the General Assembly in 1985. These are the agenda items on which further intensive consultations are clearly indicated and required so that we will be in a position to establish appropriate subsidiary bodies on them, as allowed for in the rules of procedure of the Conference. I believe it is the wish of the Conference that the President should proceed immediately to conduct such intensive consultations and I would propose to do so, beginning tomorrow. Is there any comment on this proposal?

I see none. It is so decided.

It was so decided.

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(Mr. Lowitz, United States)

With regard to agenda item 5, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, my delegation has returned to the Conference prepared to continue the detailed examination of the issues as provided for in the mandate upon which we reached agreement last March. We are convinced that a great deal of work remains to be accomplished under this mandate, and that it would be helpful to reach early agreement to resume the work of the Ad Hoc Committee. It was unfortunate that last year, under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Alfarargi of Egypt, work began too late to accomplish more than a fraction of the tasks established for the Ad Hoc Committee. The United States delegation intends to play a very active role in the continuation of this work. At the appropriate time, we plan again to have a legal specialist available to provide expert views on the coverage and appropriateness of existing agreements. We are aware of the interest among many delegations in carrying forward the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space and we see no reason for delay.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to take note of recent plenary statements that have expressed concern over new developments in the area of strategic defences. It is argued that strategic defences would destabilize the strategic balance. But the objective of the United States research programme, designated the strategic defence initiative, is in fact the opposite: it is to determine whether a defence against ballistic missile attack is feasible and would lead to an increase in stability. Moreover, the United States cannot ignore the relentless development and deployment of both offensive and defensive strategic forces by the Soviet Union, at levels that greatly exceed those of the United States. Indeed, it is precisely those Soviet activities that today are jeopardizing strategic stability. By investigating the potential for effective defence against ballistic missiles, the United States has therefore also undertaken a prudent and necessary response to these activities of the Soviet Union.

But the United States has gone further. We have proposed in the bilateral defence and space negotiations a reciprocal programme of open laboratories in strategic defence research. Under that programme, experts of the Soviet Union would be permitted to see firsthand that the strategic defence initiative does not involve offensive weapons. American experts would visit comparable Soviet facilities in their programme for strategic defence. And if research indicates the feasibility of defence against nuclear missiles, the United States would sit down together with its allies and the Soviet Union to see how we could replace all strategic ballistic missiles with such a defence, which threatens no one.