

Against this background, the Canadian Government considers it essential that various disturbing implications of this incident be carefully considered in the Outer Space Committee and its sub-committees. The implications are of concern to all members of the international community. This Committee and its sub-committees can make a significant contribution to our understanding of the complex issues raised by the use of nuclear power sources in space and of the follow-on action which would be appropriate.

Canada initiated last week a preliminary round of consultations with 37 members of this Sub-Committee. These consultations, which are still under way, are necessarily of an informal and exploratory nature, but we have been encouraged by the positive response of other governments to date. There appears to be strong support for our proposal for early consideration of the wider implications of this incident for the international community, including the scientific and technical as well as the legal implications. We received a number of useful comments and suggestions as to how the matter could be pursued in the Committee and its two sub-committees. Until we have had a further discussion of the issues here, it would be premature for my Delegation to make any specific proposals for follow-on action. Needless to say we have no wish to anticipate decisions that will appropriately be taken at a later stage in the Legal Sub-Committee and in our parent committee. Permit me, however, to express some preliminary thoughts, as a possible basis for discussion, on the direction and focus of our efforts in this regard.

Let me say, first of all, that we have no wish to comment further in this Sub-Committee on the particular circumstances of the landing of the Cosmos 954 satellite in Canada. We have from an early stage been in close touch with the Soviet authorities who have provided information on the technical characteristics of the satellite which could assist us in the ongoing search for radioactive debris. We have requested further information. We intend to continue to discuss these and other aspects of the incident, including liability and compensation aspects, through bilateral channels. Our concern here is with the general questions posed by the use of nuclear power sources in outer space.

Satellites carrying nuclear power sources have on previous occasions been launched by the Soviet Union and by the United States. We understand that, in all, approximately 40