

Mr. CABRAS (Italy): Mr. Chairman, I would like, on behalf of the Italian delegation, to speak about item 7 of our agenda entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space".

Two resolutions dealing with arms control and disarmament in outer space were adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session; both requested the Committee on Disarmament to take action on that issue. Our Committee has accordingly agreed to include a new item in its annual agenda and has scheduled two informal meetings for a first airing of the subject. These are welcome developments which prompt my delegation to place on record some preliminary views on the subject.

We believe that the informal meetings and the more substantive discussion which we expect to take place during the second part of the session could serve three main purposes:

Firstly, to offer a general overview and an evaluation of what has been achieved so far in terms of stemming a military competition in outer space;

Secondly, to proceed to an assessment of the activities taking place in outer space and of scientific and technological developments liable to threaten the preservation of outer space as a peaceful environment;

Thirdly, to identify those "further measures" and "appropriate international negotiations" which, in the words of paragraph 80 of the Final Document, are to be undertaken in order to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Both resolution 36/97 C and resolution 36/99, adopted by a very large majority at the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, refer the question of preventing an arms race in outer space to the Committee on Disarmament. It is -- in our view -- a recognition of the fact that this question cannot be treated in total isolation from the complex issues of security on Earth and the global process of disarmament. We have noted with satisfaction that delegations with a long-standing interest in the subject, like the delegation of Sweden, have indicated that the Committee on Disarmament has now the primary responsibility for efforts in this field.

It is all to the credit of the United Nations, and in particular of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the motive force in international co-operation, that progress in space sciences and technologies is being achieved in an orderly manner and benefiting mankind as a whole. These results are highly commendable, and the work of the Committee and other bodies such as the Outer Space Affairs Division remains essential. The international community has now appealed to the specific expertise and role of the Committee on Disarmament to complement that work from another angle, that of arms control and disarmament proper.