

(Mr. Qian Jiadong, China)

Another urgent matter which is closely linked with nuclear disarmament is the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The extension of the super-Power rivalry from the land, sea and airspace into outer space poses a new threat to mankind. The peoples of the world call for an immediate halt to the arms race in outer space and for its demilitarization, so that outer space can be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of mankind. We are now at a critical juncture for stopping the arms race in outer space. It is not yet too late for the world community to make immediate efforts to reverse this dangerous trend. If we do not act right now, and allow space weapons to be developed unchecked, the consequences will be too dreadful to contemplate.

During the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, great efforts were made by many delegations for the demilitarization of outer space. The resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (A/39/59), sponsored jointly by 16 countries, headed by Sri Lanka and Egypt and including China, was unanimously adopted with only one abstention. This is a significant achievement scored at the last session of the General Assembly, which testifies to the grave concern of the countries of the world over the dangerous development in outer space. The resolution calls upon all States, those with major space capabilities in particular, to take immediate measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. It calls on our Conference to establish, as soon as possible, an ad hoc committee, with a view to undertaking negotiations and urges the USSR and the United States to advise the Conference regularly of the progress of their bilateral negotiations.

In view of the complexities of the issue and in order to facilitate the negotiations, the Chinese delegation has proposed that our efforts be focused first of all on ensuring the elimination of all weapons from outer space, in other words, banning the research, testing, development, production, deployment and use of all outer space weapons, including anti-satellite and anti-ballistic missile weapons, and destroying all such existing weapons systems.

As is the case in other areas of disarmament, the super-Powers that possess far greater military capabilities than other countries logically also bear special responsibilities for the cessation of the arms race in outer space. We hope that both in the bilateral and multilateral negotiations, they will show a sense of responsibility towards humanity, and make constructive efforts to ensure that the outer space be freed from an arms race and used only for peaceful purposes.