

(Mr. Alessi, Italy)

I am pleased to note that the Committee seems determined henceforward to give the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space all the attention it deserves; some reservations expressed last spring appear to have been overcome. Proposals have been made for the establishment of a working group on this item of our agenda. We are in principle in favour of doing this. The real problem, however, is not whether or not to set up a subsidiary body, but how to proceed in this matter. It would be essential for the group to have an appropriate mandate, both because of the technical complexity of the subject and because we have no experience of negotiations on weapons control and disarmament in this area.

Without a mandate which provides a specific goal for our discussions, they are likely to prove aimless. My delegation has constantly drawn the Committee's attention to the urgent need to consider, as a matter of priority, questions concerning an effective and verifiable prohibition of anti-satellite systems. That in itself would be a sufficiently ambitious task. Although opinions in the Committee differ on this subject, we have noted with satisfaction some change in the way of thinking of certain delegations.

(Mr. Erdembilig, Mongolia)

In conclusion allow me to make some comments concerning the establishment of an ad hoc working group on the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

According to its programme of work, in the fifth week of this part of its session, the Committee on Disarmament will proceed to discuss agenda item 7.

During both the spring and the summer parts of the Committee's session, almost all delegations have spoken in favour of the creation of an ad hoc working group. There was a general understanding in the Committee on the setting up of this subsidiary body. In order to facilitate the speediest possible adoption of a formal decision on this question, during the first part of the session the Mongolian delegation formally submitted a draft mandate for the Ad Hoc Working Group for consideration by the Committee and proposed that consultations should be held with a view to reaching agreement on the text.

As you know, so far no specific comments have been made on the draft mandate we put forward, nor have any amendments or additions to it been suggested.