

(Mr. Wegener, Federal Republic of Germany)

The realm of outer space and the rules to apply to its peaceful and military uses are an important case in point. We should make it clear that the multilateral consideration of this topic, especially within the framework of our Conference, remains highly significant at a time when outer space issues have also been placed on the bilateral agenda. In the preamble to the Outer Space Treaty the international community has proclaimed mankind's common interest in the progressive research and use of space for peaceful purposes. We endorse that interest, but cannot close our eyes to the fact that the use of outer space is also of considerable and growing importance from the security aspect. Satellites from many countries are already performing important functions and, indeed, some of them an indispensable role for strategic stability. The safeguarding of these essential resources against attack is thus an important issue and an issue that must elude the competence of only a limited number of countries.

In taking this task in hand we should concentrate on specific verifiable rules that would enhance stability and prevent an arms race in space, building on those treaties and tenets of general international law that are already in force. These agreements and rules need to be developed further. The aim should be to agree on a verifiable regime ensuring the safe functioning of satellite systems so as to increase stability and strengthen mutual confidence.

This is not the place to repeat the full list of tasks regarding outer space which my delegation had spelled out before the General Assembly last October and a general reference may suffice. However, I would also like to refer to suggestions made by other delegations. For instance, in a statement of 12 June of last year the delegation of France called for improvements in the present system of registration, as well as for an agreement on the multilaterally recognized immunity of certain space objects. Proposals such as those also clearly belong in the category of multilateral diplomacy, as does the over-all field of the future outer space legal regime. I certainly purport to return to these issues as soon as the special subsidiary body of our Conference to which such items could be entrusted -- and which ought to be set up as soon as possible -- is in place.