

34. Some delegations noted that there were a number of questions that would have to be addressed in the consideration of a ban on ASAT systems, inter alia, the definition of anti-satellite weapons, the problem of dual-purpose space craft and the problems posed by the fact that ABM and ASAT technologies shared common elements. It was suggested that, taking into account the need to assure the verifiability of eventual treaty commitments, the first objective should be to prohibit untested anti-satellite systems, i.e., systems capable of hitting satellites in high orbit. The desirability of a ban on such systems was stressed on the grounds that high altitude satellites performed a number of stabilizing functions. The view was expressed that an agreement banning the development, testing and deployment of high-altitude ASAT systems should be regarded as a first step towards more comprehensive agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space.

35. Various delegations noted that bilateral agreements, such as the 1972 ABM Treaty and the two SALT agreements, provided protection for satellites of the parties that served as national technical means of verification and suggested the desirability of multilateralizing that immunity to cover the satellites of third countries.

36. On this question, the view was also expressed that the Conference on Disarmament should, in its exploration of issues relevant to arms control in outer space, consider the possibility of the protection from attack of all satellites which contributed to the preservation of strategic stability and which were instrumental in monitoring arms control and disarmament agreements. Furthermore, this same protection should be extended to the ground stations essential for the operation of those satellites.

37. One delegation, recalling that nuclear-weapon States had used military satellites in support of military actions against developing countries, held that this was a major consideration to be taken into account in connection with the question of the protection of satellites. It further stated that international peace and security could not be allowed to depend on such concepts as strategic stability for they lay at the heart of the action/reaction process that perpetuated the nuclear arms race and with it the danger of the annihilation of mankind.