

discussions on ASATs and on outer space generally, and advocates establishing an international organization to inspect satellites before they are launched into space to ensure that they are for peaceful purposes only.

Another issue of concern for the maintenance of outer space as a peaceful environment has been the progress of the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The US programme, commonly referred to as the "Star Wars" programme envisages placing systems in space which would shoot down enemy nuclear missiles, thus protecting the US against attack and limiting the effects of such an attack. While the final goal of the SDI programme remains several years away, and deployment plans are neither firm nor anticipated in the immediate future, the programme has significant implications for the Outer Space Treaty and the ABM Treaty. Several countries, especially the Soviet Union, have raised these issues with the US in a variety of fora. However, SDI remains at present a research programme. As such, it is permitted under both treaties and the US has been reluctant to discuss whether SDI might eventually violate arms control treaties (see Chapter 12, START).

At the multilateral level, the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva is the primary forum for discussion of outer space. The CD involves thirty-nine countries, including Canada. The "prevention of an arms race in outer space" has been an agenda item at the CD since 1985. In 1985, after three years of debate, the CD was able to agree on a mandate for an ad hoc committee. The Ad Hoc Committee has been renewed annually since then by the UN General Assembly.

After studying the relevant international law relating to outer space, in April 1988, the Ad Hoc Committee presented a special report to the CD. The report concluded that the legal regime that applied to outer space, did not by itself guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and that the legal regime should be consolidated and reinforced to enhance its effectiveness.

The Ad Hoc committee has continued to meet each year since 1985, but has not been able to develop a mandate for negotiations. In 1990, the UN General Assembly again re-established the Ad Hoc Committee, with the usual mandate "with a view to undertaking negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement or agreements, as appropriate, to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects."

During meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee in July and August 1990, a variety of topics were discussed. These included an Argentinean proposal that the Convention for the Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space be updated and strengthened. Poland proposed that work be undertaken to develop confidence-building measures which would promote greater openness. The US continued to maintain that a bilateral framework must be established first, before multilateral negotiations can usefully begin. The Ad Hoc Committee ended its session on 16 August 1990, with little in the way of progress towards a negotiating mandate.