

Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden):

First, however, a few words on another and deeply troublesome issue that has recently become an acute warning signal to the disarmament community, i.e., the threatening possibility of space warfare.

The recent, first and successful space shuttle voyage has been hailed, probably rightly, as new evidence of the triumphs of technology. In the background, however, expressions of unease have been heard. The important military elements of this venture have been directly referred to. In the aftermath of this technological success, rumours tell us about ambitious plans in one of the Superpowers to establish, in various ways, a permanent and active military presence in space. Understandably, the leader of the other Superpower a few days ago suggested a complete ban on the militarization of outer space. This suggestion would, of course, have been all the more welcome had that Superpower not for years been pursuing equally active technological preparations for the military use of space.

A source of immediate concern is the development of so-called anti-satellite systems for which, as we understand it, research and development is ongoing in both Superpowers, but press reports have also appeared about the possibility that other weapons systems, inter alia in the ABM field, may be under consideration.

I mention these facts because they present, in my view, another warning signal to this Committee. We should prepare ourselves for considering, at short notice, the urgency of preserving outer space, another "common heritage of mankind", for peaceful activities in accordance with paragraph 30 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and of keeping intact, in letter and in spirit, the Outer Space Treaty.