

(Mr. Franceschi, Italy)

Moreover, the important issue of verification has not yet received the attention which it deserves. We would note the contribution on this subject made by the United Kingdom in the Committee on 29 July. Verification is at the heart of any arms control measure: an undertaking which cannot be adequately verified can have a negative and destabilizing influence. In the context of outer space there are clearly particular difficulties such as detecting, identifying and tracking in the vastness of space itself; the possibility of concealment of existing weapon systems on Earth; and the limitations of existing verification technology.

We were disappointed that the discussion of proposals in this year's Ad Hoc Committee tended to concentrate on some of the less realistic and less constructive ideas which have been put forward. The attempt by some countries to press their ideas on so-called "space strike weapons" seems to us to be particularly unhelpful, first because the particular term chosen is an emotive one; secondly because it is selective in the systems which it seeks to ban; and thirdly because it seems designed to put pressure on one party to the bilateral negotiations at present being conducted.

We are convinced that those bilateral negotiations have a very important role to play in the prevention of an arms race in outer space and we would emphasize that the work carried out in this Conference should be complementary rather than prejudicial to the outcome of those bilateral negotiations. We would also note that the bilateral negotiations are tackling the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the context of overall strategic stability and disarmament. This is certainly a reason why the call for immediate negotiations on a particular subject like "space strike weapons" seems to us not to represent a practical way of proceeding.

While much time was spent on the discussion of these ideas, other proposals received less attention. We hope that next year the Committee will be able more thoroughly and systematically to carry out its mandate.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to emphasize that, although useful work was done this year, the time at our disposal was severely limited. There is still a great deal to be accomplished within the framework of the existing mandate. In this respect we welcome the indications in plenary statements by some delegations that they could continue work on this basis. We intend therefore to encourage this Conference to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee under the present mandate at the earliest possible opportunity in the 1987 session so that this important and substantive work can be pursued.