

(Mr. Lidgard, Sweden)

It would seem to my delegation that, primarily, all devices that have the purpose of hampering the stabilizing uses of outer space should be prohibited. Verification through technical means must not be interfered with. At the same time one must also be aware of the problem of asymmetry which may arise in military conflicts between space Powers and other countries as far as space communications for military purposes are concerned. A considerable number of existing satellites are designed to give early warning of attacks. If they were to be eliminated, the adversary might well react in an unpredictable way. Such destabilizing undertakings should, in the view of my delegation, be prohibited.

It is Sweden's view that outer space itself, as is already the case for the moon and other celestial bodies, should be reserved for exclusively peaceful purposes. However, it is a well-known fact that military uses of outer space are frequent and far-reaching. It therefore becomes a matter of paramount importance to prevent such activities from having a hampering effect on existing and future civilian and peaceful uses of outer space.

It is obvious that the monitoring of military activities in outer space and the verification of compliance with future limitations and prohibitions will entail a number of difficult political and technical problems. My delegation attaches great importance to this matter and wishes to stress the need to strive for multilateral solutions to these problems.

General knowledge of what is going on in terms of current and potential military developments is particularly limited as far as outer space is concerned. Here, as in other areas of the global arms race, excessive secrecy is one of the main driving forces behind the race. If the leading space Powers are really interested in reaching agreements with prospects of universal adherence, they should be forthcoming in providing information and answering the questions which will no doubt be put to them in this Committee. My delegation therefore urges them not only to resume their bilateral talks on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, but also to give a comprehensive report to the Committee on the issues and problems of substance they are faced with in these talks. This will enable the Committee on Disarmament to address the issues and to make progress in parallel with the bilateral efforts by the leading military Powers.

There can be no doubt that the space Powers and, especially, the leading among them bear special responsibility for preventing an arms race in outer space. Developments in the field of space technology are such as to widen the gap between the leading powers and most members of the world community. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the present oligopoly will last forever. The sooner this is realized and accepted, the better the prospects for progress in the forthcoming negotiations, for the benefit of us all.

It is not too late to avoid a fruitless arms race in outer space, which would waste enormous resources and make our planet still more insecure. But time is a crucial factor in disarmament negotiations. The longer we wait, the more difficult it will be to tackle the many complex problems we shall face.