

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

is a question of nipping in the bud the development testing, production and deployment of space weapons. The category of space weapons should include, in our view, any weapons likely to turn space into a theatre of war operations.

Secondly, the need for a definition of space weapons. The above characterization of the notion of the prevention of an arms race in outer space highlights the need to make an effort to spell out the concept of space weapons. In this respect, a first step has been taken at this session of the Conference with the various proposals for definitions submitted by several delegations, among them Venezuela, whose Working Paper CD/709 refers to this subject. We do not believe that it is absolutely essential for the moment to draw up an agreed definition of space weapons. We share, however, the view expressed in the Canadian document to the effect that "At this early stage of multilateral discussions on issues relating to arms control and outer space, it would be prudent to recognize, clarify and understand fully the nuances of these terms and expressions". We therefore believe that a shared view of space weapons, or at least a statement of their features or main elements, will considerably facilitate the work of the Conference on this item.

Thirdly, the existing legal order. The Ad Hoc Committee reviewed the existing legal order applicable to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In our view, the discussions on this aspect of item 5 have shown the following. (a) There exists a set of international, multilateral and bilateral legal instruments governing very important partial aspects of the issues relating to the prevention of an arms race in space. (b) It is necessary to consolidate and strengthen that set of instruments in order to ensure their full implementation and observance by States parties. (c) The existing international legal order suffers from certain shortcomings which should be corrected. These shortcomings stem, inter alia, from the fact that 30 years have elapsed since man began the conquest of space and 20 since the Outer Space Treaty was signed. In this lapse of time, space science and its military applications have developed at a dizzying pace. The existing legal régime therefore does not cover all issues involved now or at some future point in the task of preventing an arms race in outer space. In this connection we should also like to endorse the statement contained in the last paragraph of the Canadian document which after noting that space law relating to the prevention of an arms race in space has barely reached an elementary level, concludes by saying: "To prevent the risks to security on Earth which may be posed by the threat of arms placed in space or for use in space will require that States develop the law beyond this elementary stage". (d) It is essential to begin work as rapidly as possible to remedy the shortcomings and fill the gaps in the legal régime applicable to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. (e) That effort should be channelled towards the drawing up of an instrument or several legal instruments to prevent the extension into space of the arms race which is now taking place on the surface of the planet. (f) The most effective manner to achieve that objective would be to establish a general and complete prohibition of the development, testing, production and deployment of space weapons. In due course, the Conference will have to establish a precise delimitation between what constitutes research and what is understood by development, two notions that as we know carry particular importance and significance in the area of space weapons. (g) Whilst that general prohibition is being achieved, partial measures can be furthered to build up confidence and facilitate the task of negotiating a