

(Mr. Alfararqi, Egypt)

The United Nations General Assembly resolutions were clear and explicit when they called upon the Conference to establish an ad hoc committee 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. In spite of this, when establishing the Ad hoc Committee agreement was reached on an exploratory stage to prepare the way for such negotiations. After three sessions, we are still at this stage, which seems destined to go on and maybe never end. This is not a result of the fact that the subject is multifaceted and complex -- even though we agree with that -- but basically due to the differing views about the point of departure. There is quasi-unanimity that the legal régime which at present governs outer space, despite its positive traits, has shortcomings and needs to be strengthened and supplemented, while one State stands alone in its judgement that this very same legal régime is comprehensive and effective and ensures the prevention of an arms race in outer space if complied with. All this amid accusations and counter-accusations about the existence of programmes and counter-programmes for the "weaponization" of outer space.

I really do not know where the logic is in all this. Assuming the validity of the claim that the present legal régime is comprehensive and effective, after such programmes are implemented such attributes will be invalidated. And as long as the result is one and the same, namely that the legal régime governing outer space will be deficient, sooner or later, why then are we requested to stay with our hands tied and wait until the blow falls, while the voice of wisdom claims that prevention is better than cure? And assuming the continuation of the exploratory stage and our failure to reach agreement on an improved mandate and a more specific programme of work for the Ad hoc Committee, we see no reason that prevents the Ad hoc Committee from concentrating the greater part of its work in the coming period on a detailed study of the existing proposals and future initiatives aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. Only through such a study can we judge the validity, effectiveness and realism of the proposals. We believe in giving greater powers to the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee to ensure this, in accordance with his responsibility to guarantee the good conduct of work in the Ad hoc Committee, and we do not view this as going beyond the mandate or programme of work of the Ad hoc Committee in any way.