

(Mrs. Ekanga Kabeya, Zaire)

My delegation is very much interested in the consideration of measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which is the common heritage of mankind and ought to be used by States solely for peaceful purposes. My delegation is ready to agree to any constructive proposal in this connection and fully supports the idea of the consideration of this subject during the present session in a working group set up for the purpose.

CD/PV.184

7

Mr. de BEAUSSE (France)

My statement today will be on the subject of the prevention of the arms race in outer space.

In an earlier statement, on 20 April last, the French delegation stressed how important it felt it to be that the Committee should proceed, in accordance with resolution 36/97 C, to a thorough examination of the problems involved in the prevention of the deployment in outer space of weapons which might, in the not too distant future, have profoundly destabilizing effects.

At that time, like other delegations, we emphasized that what was needed first was agreement, in relation to outer space, on the meaning of certain terms, such as the word "weapons", which are often used ambiguously, as well as an exchange of views to determine priorities for our discussions.

The very interesting statements we heard at the plenary meeting devoted to this item on our agenda revealed not only, as might have been expected, that positions on this subject differ greatly, but also that this is an important problem which should be considered more thoroughly at the Committee's next session. France, as it indicated on 20 April last, is in favour of the establishment of a working group provided it has a structured agenda which will enable it to consider the various aspects of the problem methodically. France would also be in favour of a meeting of experts at the beginning of our next session, in the same way as was done so successfully in the case of chemical weapons.

Of the important aspects of the matter that were brought up during the discussion, I would like to draw particular attention to the following four points:

Recognition of our Committee's special responsibility in the attempt to achieve a multilateral consensus on the problems of the extension of the arms race to outer space;

The inadequacy of existing legal instruments, in view of current and foreseeable developments in technology;

The uncertainty surrounding the idea of the immunity of space objects; and

The constraints resulting from the long-standing and now irreversible use of outer space for both civilian and military purposes.