

(Mr. Carasales, Argentina)

The forthcoming weeks will witness once again fresh efforts to set in motion the machinery which will lead to negotiations on the three agenda items I singled out earlier, as well as a fourth which is closely linked with them: the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We must bear in mind, however, that such exercises cannot be repeated indefinitely. If there are some who are not prepared to negotiate on anything, let them say so unequivocally so that everyone can know it. The rest of us should not deploy our efforts to seeking ways of disguising this situation, and we cannot accept formulas whose sole purpose is to keep us inoffensively entertained and to give the impression that we are doing something when in fact we are not doing anything.

The Conference on Disarmament is an organ which was set up to negotiate. That is not the only thing it can do, but negotiation is its essential activity, and everything it undertakes should sooner or later be aimed towards negotiation, which must be the final objective of the entire process. The Conference on Disarmament is neither an academic nor a deliberative body, nor a wheel spinning in a vacuum and used up by its own movement.

This is a reality which underlies and is inseparable from all the so-called "procedural" activities, which take up the greater part of our time. The very word "procedural" is misleading. In any event, it is repeatedly mentioned in attempts — which my delegation cannot pass over in silence — to distract attention from the real state of affairs in the Conference. I shall refer to these attempts in the final part of my statement.

At the final plenary meetings in April, some delegations drew up a sort of balance sheet of the work of the Conference. They repeatedly expressed their now traditional lament — which we again heard on Thursday, 14 June — at the lack of progress and the consequent loss of time on matters they referred to as purely procedural, largely attributable to the obstinacy of some delegations, including the Group of 21, in insisting on the inclusion of a specific word in the mandates.

In the first place, as I said earlier, to describe the substance of the lengthy discussions in the various contact groups as "procedural" is misleading and has the connotation of minimizing the importance of the disagreements.

My delegation by no means shares this viewpoint. What has been, and will continue to be, under discussion, is basically whether the Conference on Disarmament is fully carrying out its responsibilities regarding fundamental present-day issues by setting up what is recognized as the appropriate machinery and assigning clear, concrete objectives to it, or whether it will embark on virtually academic analysis not specifically linked with the negotiating function of the Conference.

This is not a secondary or procedural alternative. The Group of 21 has given proof of great willingness to co-operate, and demonstrated extreme flexibility and understanding for certain difficulties which may be faced by some delegations. It is to be expected that specific governments will consider that some particular item is not really ripe for negotiation, or that in any event they are not prepared to negotiate on it for the time being. The Group of 21 has not always insisted on immediate negotiating mandates.