

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

by the development of anti-satellite weapon systems (ASAT), in particular on a prohibition of the testing, deployment and use of specific anti-satellite weapon systems.

We do not underestimate the technical complexities of ASAT arms control and its adequate verification. These factors indeed complicate things. They should not however discourage us from vigorously seeking practical and pragmatic solutions. An agreement which comprehensively bans all means of anti-satellite warfare appears to be impossible. Residual ASAT capacities of certain space systems are amongst the main obstacles. We have to look for a combination of verifiable and co-operative elements in a future agreement, which would prevent anti-satellite warfare from any longer being an effective military option. In the view of the Netherlands, negotiated constraints on ASAT would be greatly preferable to a totally unrestrained ASAT competition.

Discussion on ASAT arms control in the Conference on Disarmament does not preclude bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union as the major space Powers. On the contrary, it may even require such negotiations. Our work in the Conference would greatly benefit from bilateral arrangements. As I said, we hope that it will be possible for the United States and the Soviet Union soon to start outer space negotiations.

Anti-satellite weapons are only one aspect of the burgeoning arms race in outer space.

Intensive research efforts are taking place in the field of ballistic missile defence, including space-based systems. The process could, if carried beyond the present stage of feasibility research, have far-reaching implications for arms control and stability. We therefore very much hope that the United States and the Soviet Union will reach agreement to hold further talks on that subject too.

To summarize, with respect to outer space too, maintenance of peace and stability at much lower levels of armaments, as well as the prevention of developments of a destabilizing nature, remain our basic objectives.

The other day one of our colleagues, Ambassador Beesley, quoted from a recently discovered 17th Century treatise by Grotius, saying that what people had in common was much more important than what divided them. Having had a look at the text in the meantime, I now know that Grotius in fact echoed the words of an Egyptian scholar called Meletius. This early representative of the Group of 21 added that people prefer fighting about words and doctrines instead of acting rightly, because for acting rightly we had to conduct a battle with ourselves. Let us not get submerged in quarrels about words and doctrines, in the "theology of arms control". But let us conduct the battle with ourselves, let us find the right way to act.