

(Mr. Issraelyan, USSR)

I would recall that at the thirty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly the Soviet Union introduced a proposal aimed at preventing the extension of the arms race to outer space. The proposal concerned the conclusion of a treaty on the prohibition of the stationing of weapons of any kind in outer space.

The submission of the text of a draft treaty occasioned a broad discussion both in the United Nations General Assembly and in the Committee on Disarmament. The adoption by the General Assembly of two resolutions aimed ultimately at the prevention of an arms race in outer space also contributed to this end.

The main question which has arisen in the course of discussion -- and this has again been shown today by the statement of the French delegation -- is that of the determination of the basic content of possible negotiations within the framework of the Committee on Disarmament on the subject of item 7 of its agenda. Both at the Committee's spring session and during the current session, including the Committee's last meeting, on 31 August, many delegations again affirmed that the only urgent aspect of this matter is the prohibition of anti-satellite systems.

Allow me, gentlemen, to consider this point in greater detail.

There is no doubt that the question of anti-satellite systems is part of the problem of preventing an arms race in outer space. This is obvious and no one denies it. However, to confine the prohibition to anti-satellite systems means not only not looking ahead to tomorrow but also not seeing those dangerous trends which are before our eyes even today. What constitutes a threat to international peace and security is not only -- indeed, not so much weapons for attacking space objects as weapons for carrying out attacks on earth from space. Since the latter are capable of keeping the entire planet under their aim, they are infinitely more dangerous. I should like to draw attention to the fact that in his statement today the representative of France said that we should not allow space to become the departure point for acts of aggression. We agree with that. Consequently, to begin solving the problem of the prevention of an arms race in outer space with the prohibition of anti-satellite systems would be equivalent to trying to achieve similar aims, let us say in the sphere of military aircraft, by prohibiting anti-aircraft defence facilities.

There is also the fact that one and the same means of conducting activities in space can be used for carrying either useful or dangerous payloads. For example, a satellite may in one instance be collecting meteorological data and in another it may be equipped with homing missiles, representing a threat both to space and to earth. Other delegations in their speeches have referred to the versatility of satellites, including speakers at the Committee's last meeting, on 31 August. The make-up of the means used for conducting space activities is a matter of general knowledge. It includes land-based equipment, launching devices, controls, and so on.

Thus if we are thinking of prohibiting anti-satellite systems, then we at once have to answer the question: what are we going to prohibit? If that is to include everything that helps put into space devices for the destruction or damaging of space objects, then practically all space activity might find itself threatened