

(Mr. Vejvoda, Czechoslovakia)

Perhaps one of the best illustrations in this respect could, in not so distant a future, come to us from beyond the limits of our planet. The arms race has not only intensified recently on the Earth but is threatening finally to penetrate into outer space. This development would have far-reaching consequences which we cannot even foresee now. But it is now already quite clear that, as was stated in the declaration of the Soviet Government of 29 June, "it would substantially raise the risk of the catastrophe of war and undermine the prospects for limitation and reduction of armaments in general".

The rapid development of space technology in recent years has confronted us with a situation which can be compared without exaggeration to a crossroads offering two diametrically opposite directions to follow. We should not have to think too much about which way to choose. It is enough to look at General Assembly resolution 38/70 or to listen carefully to statements pronounced in this room by the delegations from all regional groups. A responsible and realistic approach should prevail over shortsighted considerations of military planners tempted by new technological achievements. It is with deep concern that we notice that the latter approach still plays a decisive role in the formulation of United States policy with respect to outer space. The illusion of the development of an effective strategic defence system based in space is still nourished. The United States public is being generously fed with this illusion, while almost nothing is being said on the possible dangerous destabilizing effects of this programme, the "effectiveness" of which would be first apparent in undermining the existing agreements on the limitation of ABM systems.

This approach goes not only against the vital interests of other States, including the allies of the United States, but is clearly contrary to the interest of the United States itself. Obviously, United States legislators realize that, as was confirmed by the recent vote of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress for an amendment prohibiting appropriations for the tests of the United States anti-satellite weapons in space if the USSR and other countries abstain from carrying out such tests. We see this vote as closely connected with the assumption by the Soviet Union last year of a unilateral commitment not to put anti-satellite weapons in space as long as other States, including the United States, refrain from placing anti-satellite weapons of any type in space, which also covers test-launchings of these weapons. We also welcome the statement by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Konstantin Chernenko, of 11 June, that the moratorium announced by the Soviet Union remains in force and that it is regarded only as a first step toward the total prohibition of anti-satellite weapons, including the elimination of such systems already in existence. It was also proposed to the United States to start negotiations with a view to achieving an agreement to this effect.

My delegation would like to stress that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic supports fully the undertaking of bilateral Soviet-United States negotiations on this question and an early achievement of concrete results of those negotiations. We believe that these negotiations should be started as soon as possible, and their launching should not be complicated by raising other disarmament problems which, for the time being, cannot be solved for well known reasons.