

(Mr. Campora, Argentina)

prefer to keep secret the nature of the vast majority of objects that they launch into space. It is then inevitable that the secrecy of the activity of some should generate a similar attitude in others.

The 1975 Convention on the Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space provides an appropriate basis of rules that can be perfected, first of all, by establishing their binding nature and then by incorporating in them verification clauses enabling it to be checked that the information recorded is reliable. The efficient operation of a register of objects launched into space and a corresponding verification system would solve a series of problems relating to the immunity of satellites intended for peaceful use, since it would be possible, as a result, to ascertain the purpose of a space object and, consequently, its right to enjoy immunity. Similar arrangements could be made for the registration of those satellites which have special functions, such as observation satellites, early-warning satellites, satellites for the purpose of monitoring compliance with disarmament agreements, etc.

There is, perhaps today, no greater focus of attention among the issues linked to the drawing up of disarmament treaties or agreements than that of verification. For almost two years now -- to be precise, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 40/152/0 relating to verification, a resolution supported by the two military alliances -- we have undoubtedly been witnessing a real diplomatic competition as to who is more enthusiastic about verification formulae. Verification is today the essential and preliminary step for any disarmament agreement. Very complex formulae are being tested in the context of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons and we are all aware too of the situation with regard to the verification of nuclear-weapon tests and to other items such as radiological weapons, negative assurances and so on. Verification in the context of the items we have mentioned should provide a solution to intricate situations such as, for instance, avoiding non-permitted production of substances within an industry as common and widely scattered as the chemical industry. None the less, gradually and with admirable creativity and imagination, verification mechanisms are being worked out.

But we cannot help feeling surprised at the fact that the analysis of the item relating to verification within the framework of the Ad hoc Committee on Outer Space has not been the subject of greater attention despite the fact that activity in outer space originates here on the Earth's surface in a very limited number of places. The space Powers, which are few in number, also have only a few places for launching objects into space. Verification of the nature of the objects that are placed in space could be effected at the launch sites themselves and that would entirely dispel all doubts as to the military or peaceful nature of an object sent into space. It is obvious that the implementation of monitoring and verification machinery at the bases for the launching of vehicles with cargoes of a military and strategic nature would be resisted by the respective space Powers. It can be deduced therefore that the opening of such sites for the verification, albeit only visual, of loads to be placed in orbit would require a political decision by the space Powers, aimed at achieving a certain transparency in their policy for the use of outer space. To sum up and to conclude this statement, it just remains for me to point out that the prevention of an arms race in outer space depends solely on simple acts of political will by the space Powers.