

Mr. QIAN JIADONG (China):

In the past few weeks, a number of delegations have made statements on agenda item 5, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", which is an issue of real importance. Although the spring session is now drawing to its conclusion, the Chinese delegation still wishes to offer some of its views on this issue.

The importance of the issue of outer space is twofold: on the one hand, it is opening up an entirely new and bright prospect for mankind; and on the other hand, it may bring about to the mankind a horrible disaster with unimaginable consequences.

Over the centuries, in ancient mythology and legends, outer space has been described as a beautiful and harmonious paradise. With the development of science and technology, man has eventually freed himself from the bondage of gravitation, broken through the atmosphere and entered this mysterious world. In the 1950s, the first man-made earth satellite was successfully launched. Later, man set foot on the moon and space exploration extended almost to the edges of the solar system. Man is even now able to stroll in outer space as leisurely as in a courtyard. It is a remarkable achievement that man's ability to conquer and utilize the universe has been enhanced so rapidly in the short span of 30 years. Space technology has already been broadly and effectively applied to many aspects of human life, including communication, broadcasting, weather forecasting and earth resources surveys, etc. Yet, its great potential for the promotion of social progress is just starting to manifest itself. With such a bright future in perspective, how can one help feeling exulted and encouraged?

Unfortunately, however, the tranquillity of outer space is not exempt from the impact of the current turbulent and tense international situation; and it is overshadowed by the arms race too. Guided by the doctrine of "He who controls outer space dominates the earth", military activities in outer space are intensifying, with contending development of various kinds of space weapons. One system of space weapons has already become operational, another has entered the testing stage, and programmes for even more sophisticated weapon systems are being planned. If this trend is left unchecked, outer space, following land, sea and air, will before long very likely become the fourth fratricidal battlefield of mankind. Should this scenario come true, the paradise of our imaginations would then be turned into a hell, a fact about which people cannot but be concerned.