

I am going to speak today on item 7 of the agenda, the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space.

The peaceful uses of outer space are now, 25 years after the start of the space age, manifold and bring great benefits in areas such as communications, navigation, meteorology and remote sensing of the earth. It is no doubt of great importance further to advance the peaceful use of this environment. Simultaneously, however, the opening and closing of our meetings. Secondly, I shall seek your collaboration to keep interventions in the Committee and in informal meetings, as well as in informal consultations, as concise and to the point as possible. Thirdly, I wish to remind you of my suggestion last year that we could perhaps do with a little less formality in our proceedings, although I certainly do not wish to deprive my predecessor of the praise he so rightly deserves.

I count on your understanding, your co-operation and your support to enable me to steer our spring session to a successful conclusion.

The Committee continues today its consideration of item 6 of its agenda, entitled "comprehensive programme of disarmament". In any case, members wishing to make statements on any other subject relevant to the work of the Committee may do so in accordance with rule 30 of the Rules of Procedure.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Sweden, Argentina, Cuba, Australia, Morocco, China and Indonesia.

I now give the floor to the first speaker on my list, the representative of Sweden, His Excellency Ambassador Lidgard.

Awareness of the threatening evolution as far as outer space is concerned is certainly not new. Several attempts have been made to bring this matter to the attention of this Committee. I have in mind particularly the thoughtful contributions made by Italy and the Netherlands and, of course, the two resolutions adopted by the General Assembly last autumn, where the Soviet Union, as well as the western countries I just mentioned, played an important role in promoting multilateral negotiations on this issue.

It is a fact, well-known to all of us here, that disarmament negotiations are often outstripped by the pace of developments in military technology, which make warfare possible in environments which have so far been spared from militarization. This is a matter of great concern to my Government and no doubt to many other Governments represented in this Committee.

Efforts have already been made in this respect. One example is the Outer Space Treaty, which prohibits the emplacement of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in outer space and reserves the use of the moon and other celestial bodies exclusively for peaceful purposes. Its provisions are, however, not sufficient to prevent a general arms race in outer space. Further efforts must be made in this regard.

This matter is now before the Committee on Disarmament. My delegation welcomes the fact that these important and, in some respects, urgent questions will be dealt with in the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. We consider that, after the initial exploratory talks taking place during the first part of this year's session, an ad hoc working group of the Committee should be established with an appropriate mandate in the summer of 1982.

The two Superpowers play a predominant role in the military and civilian exploitation of outer space. It is therefore a welcome development that they have already held bilateral talks on the problem of avoiding an arms race in this environment. It is regrettable that these talks have been suspended. In the view of my delegation, it is highly desirable that they should be resumed as soon as possible.