

(Mr. Komatina, Secretary-General of the  
Conference and Personal Representative  
of the Secretary-General)

"The prevention of an arms race in outer space, which is also on your agenda, continues to be an objective of major concern. The international community is legitimately interested in preserving outer space for peaceful purposes. Consequently, I trust that the Conference will be able, in its deliberations, to contribute to the achievement of mutual understanding and agreement. The consideration of this subject, like that of nuclear war and nuclear testing, illustrates very clearly the close linkage between bilateral and multilateral disarmament negotiations at the present time. Everything should be done to ensure that the approaches in one strengthen the prospects of progress in the other.

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(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Much the same occurred in relation to the item "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", the resolution on which, No. 39/59 of 12 December, received the largest numbers of votes in favour, 150, with none against and a single abstention. In this resolution, the General Assembly stated that it was "gravely concerned at the danger posed to all mankind by an arms race in outer space, in particular the impending danger of exacerbating the current state of insecurity by developments that could further undermine international peace and security", and reiterated that "the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the primary role in the negotiation of an agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of such an arms race in all its aspects.

What I have referred to as the "justified impatience and ill-concealed indignation" reflected in many of the latest General Assembly resolutions, amply illustrated by the paragraphs I have just quoted, seem even more visible in the two documents to which I referred at the beginning of this statement, although without identifying them as I shall now do in chronological order: the statement made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 12 December 1984 before the plenary of the General Assembly when the latter took up consideration of the First Committee's reports concerning disarmament, and the New Delhi Declaration, adopted in the Indian capital a week ago, on 28 January, by the Heads of State or Government of six countries situated on three continents and two sub-continents: Argentina, Greece, India, Sweden, Tanzania and Mexico. In view of the importance which, in my opinion, these two documents possess, it is extremely desirable that they should receive suitable treatment; in this first statement I shall deal exclusively with the former, and shall deal with the latter in my next statement.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

With regard to the demilitarization of outer space, the statement employs equally pressing and vigorous terms:

"The time is equally pressing for talks on space weapons. It seems that, where weapons are concerned, the only way to halt a race is to prevent its starting. Once the race is under way, agreement is far more difficult. And the winner enjoys only a few, insecure moments of victory before the other side catches up, leaving both to look back over yet more wasted human effort and ingenuity. There is no final advantage in the arms race. It is therefore crucial that a ban on weapons in the new theatre, outer space, be concluded at the earliest possible time, before it is once again too late."

The statement on which I have been commenting ends by putting forward a number of opinions, including the following:

"The role of the Secretary-General under the Charter requires him to confront any matter which may threaten international peace and security. It is my belief that nothing poses a greater threat to the international community than the continuing arms race, above all the nuclear arms race..."

"Many words have been spoken in the cause of disarmament. We are all aware of the goals, as outlined in the Final Document of the first special session..."

"Every person on this earth has a stake in disarmament. In the nuclear age, decisions affecting war and peace cannot be left to military strategists or even to Governments. They are indeed the responsibility of every man and woman. And it is therefore the responsibility of all of us in this chamber to break the cycle of mistrust and insecurity and respond to humanity's yearning for peace."



(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Ideas such as those which abound in the statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations upon which I have just finished commenting deserve, in our opinion, serious reflection, especially on the part of the representatives of the nuclear-weapon Powers, above all those of them possessing the biggest arsenals of these terrible instruments of mass destruction, as we begin this session in the year of the fortieth anniversary of the birth of the United Nations and of the destruction of Hiroshima through the explosion of the first atomic bomb. It is to be hoped that this reflection may provide salutary inspiration for this Conference on Disarmament to be able fruitfully to undertake the work entrusted to it.

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(Mr. Issraelyan, USSR)

Lastly, while speaking of the priority issues on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament it is impossible to overlook the question which life itself has today placed at the centre of the struggle against the nuclear threat, the struggle for disarmament. I mean, of course, the question of preventing an arms race in space.

The Soviet Union's view that to resolve the problem of the non-militarization of space is today of prime importance to the cause of preventing nuclear war and curbing the arms race received practically unanimous support at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The dialectics of the nuclear space age are such that unless a solid barrier is erected against an arms race in space, there can be no hope of halting it effectively on Earth. The Soviet delegation therefore proposes to seek the establishment by the Conference of an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in space. The basis for the mandate of that body should be the provisions contained in General Assembly resolution 39/59, adopted on the initiative of the socialist and non-aligned countries by the votes of 150 States, or virtually the whole international community.

(Mrs. Theorin, Sweden)

ABM systems are not the solution to security problems. This reality is reflected in the 1972 ABM Treaty, which prohibits the development, testing or deployment of systems, or components of systems, whether sea-based, air-based, space-based or mobile land-based, which are intended to counter strategic ballistic missiles. The Treaty itself recognized that "effective measures to limit anti-ballistic missile systems would be a substantial factor in curbing the race in strategic offensive arms and would lead to a decrease in the risk of outbreak of war involving nuclear weapons". No prohibition, however, exists today as to other space weapons, such as ASAT-weapons.

There is a close link between development of ASAT-weapons and ABM systems. The construction of dual capacity weapons, which can be used both against satellites and ballistic missiles, is indeed feasible. Development and testing of ASAT-weapons could be used to circumvent the ABM Treaty.

It is encouraging that the Soviet Union and the United States have included prevention of an arms race in outer space in their forthcoming negotiations.

Development, testing and deployment of all space weapons must be banned and such a ban must totally prohibit ASAT weapons -- existing or planned -- and include the destruction of existing ones. Awaiting a treaty banning such weapons all States should refrain from testing, developing and deploying ASAT weapons. The use of ASAT weapons against another country's space craft is already forbidden in international law.

All countries, not only the super-Powers, have a stake in the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The Conference on Disarmament should respond to the request by the General Assembly, and begin its work towards an international treaty or treaties banning all space weapons, including weapons directed against targets in space and from space to earth by setting up an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. My Government hopes and expects that both super-Powers will co-operate in this endeavour.