

MONGOLIA

PREVENTION OF AN ARMS RACE IN OUTER SPACE

The struggle to preserve a peaceful outer space is at the present time one of the principal aspects of over-all efforts to ensure world peace and international security. The maintenance of peace and security in outer space has enormous significance for the preservation of peace on earth. Consequently, the prevention of the militarization of outer space is one of the foremost problems confronting mankind, and man's future depends on whether he manages to resolve that problem.

The socialist countries have consistently opposed and they continue to oppose the conversion of outer space into a theatre for the arms race. With their direct participation, a number of international treaties and agreements now in force were concluded, with the aim of ensuring that outer space would be used solely for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of mankind. Under the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in three environments (1963), outer space was closed to nuclear weapon test explosions and any other nuclear explosions. The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies contained an important international legal undertaking not to place in orbit around the earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction. The conclusion in 1977 of the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques constituted a useful measure towards the limitation of the military use of outer space.

Important provisions, substantially reducing the possibility of the use of outer space for military purposes, are contained in the bilateral Soviet-United States agreements concluded in the 1970s. Under the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems of 1972, supplemented by the Protocol of 1974, the parties undertook "not to develop, test or deploy" space-based ABM systems or components. The Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms of 1972 placed definite limits on the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The progress achieved towards the demilitarization of outer space would be even greater if the United States had ratified the SALT II Treaty signed at Vienna on 18 June 1979, which provides not only for quantitative but also for qualitative limitations on such weapons. It contains provisions limiting the possibilities for the development of systems for placing nuclear weapons into earth orbit, and also of fractional orbital systems.

Thus, important international legal instruments have been elaborated and are in force, limiting the use of outer space for military purposes. However, all these agreements do not exclude the possibility of the deployment in outer space of types of weapons which do not fall within the definition of weapons of mass destruction.

It was for that reason that a proposal was put forward at the thirty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly with the object of preventing the extension of the arms race to outer space and the prevention of the conversion of outer space into a source of aggravation of the relations between States. To that end, a draft treaty on the prohibition of the stationing of weapons of any kind in outer space (document CD/274 of 7 April 1982) was put before the Committee; it contains a provision whereby States parties would undertake not to place in orbit around the earth objects carrying weapons of any kind, install such weapons on celestial bodies, or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner, including on reusable manned space vehicles of an existing type or of other types which States parties might develop in the future.

In its resolutions 36/99 and 37/83 the United Nations General Assembly suggested that the Committee on Disarmament should elaborate an international agreement on this subject. Prompted by these resolutions, the delegations of the socialist countries in the Committee have already for two years now been advocating the establishment of an ad hoc working group to draft an agreement or agreements on the basis of existing and future proposals.

The Mongolian delegation notes that, in spite of the fact that a number of proposals have been put forward and that the majority of delegations are in favour of the immediate starting of negotiations on item 7 of the agenda, the Committee has been unable to reach a consensus on the mandate of the ad hoc working group. The deadlock in the negotiations on this question are a cause of concern in view of the implementation of military space programmes and the development, within the framework of those programmes, of weapons systems for the carrying out of strikes in and from outer space and of space weapons aimed at targets in outer space, in air space and on earth. The deployment of such weapons will increase mistrust in the relations between States, make co-operation in the sphere of the peaceful use of outer space more difficult and lead to a disruption of the existing strategic balance and thus to an increase in the danger of the outbreak of war.

A subject of particular concern and alarm in the international community is the decision of the United States administration to begin developing a large-scale anti-missile defence system. The implementation of this decision in practice could jeopardize not only the prevention of a further arms race in outer space but also the existing agreements and treaties.

The Mongolian delegation, sharing the concern of the overwhelming majority of delegations at the danger of the extension of the arms race to outer space, urges the speedy settlement of the procedural and organizational problems which are hampering agreement on the mandate of an ad hoc working group. Such a mandate ought to provide for the possibility of the conduct of negotiations aimed at the conclusion of an agreement or agreements for the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

In the view of the Mongolian delegation the ad hoc working group could, during the initial phase of its negotiations, identify those questions that are of immediate concern to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

In view of the importance and urgency of the task of resolving the problem of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the Mongolian delegation appeals to the Committee on Disarmament to make renewed efforts to achieve progress on item 7 of its agenda. It is firmly convinced that, given the political will and readiness to achieve mutually acceptable solutions, there is no problem on which an appropriate agreement could not be reached.