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FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND AND FIFTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 13 February 2007, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Johann KELLERMAN (South Africa)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1052nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As you are all aware, Ambassador Mtshali is in South Africa at present, so for the rest of the week I shall be taking care of business on her behalf. I have the following speakers for today's plenary meeting on my list: Germany, on behalf of the European Union, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Germany, again on behalf of the European Union, Israel, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Myanmar, the Syrian Arab Republic, Egypt again, the United States of America, Japan, Australia, Canada and Mexico.

I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Bernhard Brasack.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to take the floor at the top of such an impressive list of speakers this morning.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Ambassador Meyer of Canada and Ambassador da Rocha Paranhos of Brazil on the assumption of the posts of coordinators, for item 3 and item 4 of our agenda, respectively. The EU would like to assure you, Mr. President, as well as all the coordinators, of our full support in your efforts to guide and lead our work.

The EU and its member States are conscious of the growing involvement of the international community in outer space activities for development and progress, and of the increasing dependence on outer space for their economic and industrial development as well as their security. We are also actively cooperating in various space initiatives. Such activities should be developed in a peaceful environment: an arms race in outer space must be prevented. Such prevention is an essential condition for the strengthening of international security and for the promotion of international cooperation in the free exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes by all States. The more the international community is dependent on outer space for its economic and scientific development and security, the more important it is to operate in a safe and secure space environment.

Fifty years ago, in 1957, the space age dawned with the Soviet satellite, Sputnik.

This year, in the year of its 40th anniversary, we recall in particular the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and other Celestial Bodies (generally known as the Outer Space Treaty), which declares the use of outer space to be the province of all mankind - thus the global commons not subject to claims of national sovereignty.

The 1979 Agreement governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (generally known as the Moon Treaty) is another major international treaty on the peaceful uses of outer space.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

Existing arms control agreements and previous such agreements touch outer space in part, like the Partial Test-Ban Treaty of 1963 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996, the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems of 1972, the SALT I and II agreements of 1972 and 1979 and the ENMOD Treaty of 1977.

Other measures relate to the use of space which could be termed confidence-building measures, like the Registration Convention of 1976, or to liability for space activities - the Liability Convention of 1976 - or cooperation, like the Rescue Agreement of 1968.

In the CD we recognize a growing convergence of views on the elaboration of measures to strengthen transparency, confidence and security in the peaceful uses of outer space.

We also would like to recall that the EU countries unanimously voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly resolutions on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and on prevention of an arms race in outer space in the sixty-first United Nations General Assembly.

We appreciated the careful consideration of the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space in 2006 by the Conference on Disarmament. This includes the valuable compilation (CD/INF.50) of basic documents prepared by the CD secretariat containing documents since 1984, and certainly the update just provided recently.

The EU therefore appreciates the attention given so far by the CD to PAROS and the P-6 decision to task a coordinator for our work in the CD in 2007. We pledge to Ambassador Meyer our full support and place great confidence in his abilities and dexterity.

We would like to thank UNIDIR, and in particular, Ms. Patricia Lewis, for their consistent and tireless efforts as regards this issue over many years.

The risk represented by "space debris" for the operability of all space activities is an additional source of concern. From this point of view, the activity of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), including on "space debris", seems relevant for the CD deliberations. Some form of interaction between the work in the CD and COPUOS would therefore be desirable. In this connection, we suggest considering the possibility of inviting the Chairman of the Committee to brief us on questions relevant to our work, including the issue of space debris, at the appropriate time.

As outlined in its statement at the opening session of the CD on 24 January 2007, the EU is very concerned about the recent test of an anti-satellite weapon.

The EU stands ready to explore in a substantial manner the possibilities of preventing an arms race in outer space. The recent test of an anti-satellite weapon should serve as a wake-up call in this regard and remind us of the urgency of the matter and our responsibility to act.

We should perhaps not be overambitious as to what is achievable in the short term. A sense of realism is called for. However, it would be irresponsible to block the further discussion of this agenda item for fear of too ambitious goals to be pursued.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

More than ever a sense of proportion and a sense of responsibility are called for. A gradual and progressive approach is possible. The adoption of measures of transparency and confidence-building measures, as conducive towards the prevention of an arms race in outer space, could be discussed.

Any confidence-building measures could, among others, be based on the principle of non-interference with non-aggressive activities in space and drawing up a “code of conduct” and “rules of behaviour” or “rules of the road” in space. Elements drawn up might include the avoidance of collisions or interference and minimum distances between satellites placed in the same orbit. Avoiding collisions, avoidance of dangerous manoeuvres and debris mitigation could be among other issues that warrant further evaluation and discussion.

Discipline in the launching of objects into space is fundamental in space security. In this context, the EU would also like to underline the relevance of the Hague International Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation and the need for its universalization.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Germany, speaking on behalf of the European Union, for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Chang of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. CHANG (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, last week the CD, with the help of the coordinators, had very useful discussions on nuclear disarmament and an FMCT. My delegation hopes to follow suit this week when we deliberate on PAROS and NSA. We are confident that under your able leadership, we will be able to lay a solid foundation for future discussions on these agenda items.

Today's world relies heavily on space technology for a wide variety of peaceful and non-peaceful purposes, such as meteorology, telecommunications, navigation, disaster management, medical research, reconnaissance and so forth. The process of globalization itself is dependent upon safeguarding the peaceful use of outer space. Therefore, all nations, both spacefaring and non-spacefaring, have a vital stake and responsibility in ensuring that space remains a common heritage for mankind. However, we cannot take the unlimited and safe access to space resources for granted. Radio-frequency spectra are almost saturated, and useful orbital positions are densely crowded. Satellites and spacecraft are increasingly jeopardized by space debris and can potentially be targeted by space weapons. The important question we have before us is: how can we safeguard the uninterrupted and free use of outer space for peaceful purposes?

In this respect, my delegation is of the view that space security, including the prevention of an arms race in outer space, is a relevant issue to be dealt with by the CD. We appreciate the efforts made by some member States to stimulate the discussions on this subject. Among them, the working papers submitted last year will be important assets for the CD. They quite pertinently address the issues and challenges to be overcome. We are hopeful that intensive consultations under this agenda item during this session, at both the formal and informal meetings, will contribute to a deeper understanding and a further elaboration of the main issues.

(Mr. Chang, Republic of Korea)

Space technology, like WMD technologies, is by nature dual-use. Furthermore, as the industrial sector is growing increasingly involved in space activities, the space environment is rapidly changing from the past. The artificial barriers between civil and military activities in space are already dissolving. In that sense, we look forward to seeing enhanced dialogue between the CD and other international forums, including COPUOS, the First and Fourth Committees of the United Nations and the International Telecommunication Union.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Outer Space Treaty, which is the cornerstone of international space law. On this occasion, in addition to renewing efforts towards universality and the more effective implementation of the Treaty, as the WMD Commission recommended in its report, we may need to consider the possibility of strengthening the treaty and extending its scope.

The Republic of Korea, as one of the countries which is actively pursuing peaceful space activities, is very concerned that the proliferation of space debris could threaten peaceful uses of outer space. It is not a threat confined to the spacefaring nations; there always exists a possibility of damage on the ground as well, as was witnessed in the case of the Kosmos satellite which crashed in Canada. Noting with great interest the draft guidelines on space debris mitigation which provide for avoidance of intentional destruction and other harmful activities, my delegation hopes that COPUOS will adopt these guidelines as soon as possible.

Transparency and confidence-building measures are highly important for multilateral cooperation on governing space. A particular challenge in this regard is to build confidence amongst the major Powers concerning their strategic motives for the use of space. We may need to start by seeking ways to promote universal adherence to, and to ensure full compliance with, existing agreements and arrangements, such as the Registration Convention and the Hague Code of Conduct, by spacefaring nations. Other measures of transparency and confidence-building, which are complementary to current mechanisms and conducive to enhancing space security, could fruitfully be discussed in the CD.

It is incumbent upon us all to demonstrate that it is in the strategic interests of all concerned to preserve the peaceful, cooperative use of outer space. Given the wide gap inside and outside the CD on the key issues related to outer space, for instance the definitions of such essential elements as outer space, space objects, space weapons and the applicability of any verification mechanism, we believe that a pragmatic step-by-step approach is the most viable option at this stage. As many of the concepts have already been in use in other international instruments governing outer space, we should be rather cautious in adopting any definition anew. Through implementing various confidence-building measures, respecting existing commitments, cooperating with other international forums and adopting a strategy of starting with the easily agreed and immediate issues and then eventually taking on the more complex and difficult ones, we will be able to make our work on PAROS move forward.

Finally, I am pleased to hear that the six parties meeting in Beijing have just agreed on the initial steps to take for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem. I hope that the word from Beijing will reach the CD sooner or later.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Loshchinin of the Russian Federation.

Mr. LOSHCININ (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): I would like, once again, to draw the attention of distinguished colleagues to the speech made by President V.V. Putin at an international conference on security in Munich on 10 February 2007. In particular he said: "The emergence of new destabilizing types of weapons is unacceptable. The need for measures to prevent new areas of confrontation, especially in outer space, is obvious ... In Russia's opinion, the militarization of outer space could have unpredictable consequences for the international community, no less significant than the beginning of the nuclear era. And we have repeatedly put forward initiatives designed to ban weapons from outer space."

President V.V. Putin also informed the conference of the preparation of a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, which we hope will be sent to our partners in the near future. This important statement by the Russian President was almost completely devoted to issues of disarmament and international security. Of course, we will refer to it again in the future, and the following observation in the Russian President's statement has special significance for the Conference: "The potential danger of the destabilization of international relations is also connected with the obvious stagnation in the field of disarmament. Russia calls for the resumption of dialogue on this ... issue."

The issue of preventing an arms race in outer space has many facets and many dimensions. We are constantly discussing them in the Conference. We are all becoming increasingly dependent on outer space technologies and increasingly use them in key areas of human activity. This is why it is all the more essential to guarantee security in outer space - the times demand it. The Conference can do this through a multilateral agreement, taking into account the legitimate interests of all States and by closing the well-known lacunae that exist in international outer space law. It is time to move from words to action. Otherwise, as recent developments would seem to suggest, we shall have to prohibit an arms race in outer space rather than prevent it, which is of course a more difficult task.

In our forthcoming work on PAROS, we propose a focus on the idea of drafting a new treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects. Elements of such a treaty were proposed by Russia and China along with a group of co-sponsors in June 2002 and have already been under discussion for more than four years. The treaty is intended to prohibit the placement of weapons in outer space, that is, the weaponization of outer space, as well as the use of force against space devices located in outer space. Subsequently we could continue consideration of the issue of the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space, following the structure of the proposed elements of a treaty I have just mentioned.

The following topics could form the focus of our work. First, the preamble, the goals of the new agreement, its place in the system of international outer space law, the foundations of its importance and its practical usefulness. Second, terms and definitions, the need for them and their possible content. Third, scope and basic obligations. Fourth, the use of outer space for

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

peaceful and other purposes. Fifth, transparency and confidence-building in outer space activities; the necessity for and possibility and content of measures to verify compliance with basic obligations. Sixth, a procedure for dispute settlement. Seventh, the need for and the possibility of establishing an executive organization for the treaty. The way in which this organization would interact with the United Nations Outer Space Committee and other international organizations. Eighth, the treaty and international cooperation in outer space exploration and development for peaceful purposes. Ninth, organizational matters: the possibility of submitting amendments, procedure for treaty signature and ratification and its entry into force. Tenth, possible additional elements of the treaty.

Of course, if necessary we could have debates on specific sub-themes within each of the items mentioned above. In our view, for instance, the issues of specific definitions and the relationship between the proposed limitations, on the one hand, and existing practices, plans and military and outer space policies on the other merit separate consideration. The issue of confidence-building measures in outer space activities deserves special attention. Of course, we hold all these discussions with the participation of our experts.

Please consider these ideas as our delegation's contribution to the thematic debates on agenda item 3 which are currently being held in the course of informal plenary meetings of the Conference. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the coordinator for this agenda item, the distinguished Ambassador of Canada, Mr. Meyer, for his ongoing efforts, and wish him every success.

As we promised earlier, today we are ready to present together with our distinguished Chinese colleagues the third expanded version of the "Compilation of comments and suggestions to the working paper CD/1679". This document is a review of all the basic ideas which have been expressed so far in the course of discussions on basic elements of a treaty for the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space. We have attempted to be objective and to include not only the pros, but also the cons. The document is of practical value and will enable us to move forward without going over ground already covered, and will help delegations to focus quickly on the subject area of military issues in space in the course of our thematic discussions. But first and foremost, we hope that the compilation will help to convince those who still have doubts as to the need for a treaty or some of its elements.

The comprehensive and systematically organized material that has been brought together in the compilation is a striking illustration of progress in efforts by the Conference to address the issue of the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space. This document also indicates what we shall have to think through and discuss and how, if we are going to secure this long-awaited agreement.

We ask the secretariat to circulate the compilation as an official document of the Conference. At the same time, we would like to thank the secretariat for publishing all the documents on PAROS tabled by delegations last year as a separate compendium (CD/INF.50/Add.1 of 1 February 2007). This is an addendum to the very large and useful collection of all documents on the subject of military issues in space issued in the Conference since 1984. This collection is to be found in document CD/INF.50 of 23 May 2006.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

It is our hope that active use will be made of these materials in the course of our thematic debates on the issue of the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space now and in the future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Brasack of Germany, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. BRASACK (Germany): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the indulgence of allowing me the floor for a second time in this CD session. This statement on behalf of the EU is on the issue of negative security assurances.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate again Ambassador Meyer of Canada and Ambassador da Rocha Paranhos of Brazil on the assumption of the posts of coordinators for item 3 and item 4 of our agenda respectively. The EU would like to assure you, Mr. President, as well as all the coordinators, of our full support in your efforts to guide and lead our work.

The EU welcomes this debate in the CD on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, in continuation of last year's focused structured debates dedicated to the issue, which remains important on the international disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

As was already made clear in the EU Common Position of 25 April 2005 on the 2005 NPT Review Conference, by which we stand, the EU is supportive of pursuing the consideration of the issue of security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT. We recall in this context the relevant aspects of Decision 2 adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and bear in mind the current situation. As stated in the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, adopted by the European Council in December 2003, and again in the EU Common Position on the 2005 NPT Review Conference, positive and negative security assurances can play an important role: they can serve both as an incentive to forgo the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and as a deterrent. The EU will promote the further consideration of security assurances.

In the context of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, the EU continues to attach great importance to the development of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned, as elaborated in the guidelines adopted by the UNDC in its 1999 substantive session. The EU also recalls that nuclear-weapon-free zones must assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in the territories concerned. Nuclear-weapon-free zones enhance regional and global peace and security and are a means of promoting nuclear disarmament, stability and confidence. Implementing nuclear-weapon-free zones is a way of enhancing negative security assurances on a regional basis.

(Mr. Brasack, Germany)

The EU notes that NSAs can also be granted on a bilateral, multilateral or regional basis.

The EU in particular calls on all States in the Middle East to make that region into an effectively verifiable zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMD and their delivery systems, in keeping with the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

The EU reiterates its commitment to a Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons.

As contemplated in the guidelines adopted by the UNDC in 1999, every zone is the outcome of specific circumstances and must reflect the diversity of situations existing within it. Every nuclear-weapon-free zone must be a well-defined geographical entity.

We call on nuclear-weapon States to reaffirm, in the appropriate forums, the existing security assurances noted by the United Nations Security Council in resolution 984 of 1995 and to sign and ratify the relevant protocols on nuclear-weapon-free zones drawn up following the requisite consultations, recognizing that treaty-based security assurances are available to such zones.

The momentum in the CD that developed last year and is maintained and further enhanced by this year's P-6 proposal for an organizational framework could also add new perspectives for the further consideration of the issue of NSAs in a more substantial way. Already in its statement in the opening session of the CD on 24 January 2007, the EU recalled its support for pursuing the consideration of security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Germany for his statement on behalf of the European Union, and I now call upon Ambassador Levanon of Israel.

Mr. LEVANON (Israel): Mr. President, allow me once again to congratulate Ambassador Mtshali on the assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I take this opportunity to commend her and her team for the extensive efforts she made during the intersessional period to introduce the programme of work for the year 2007. I can assure her of mine and my delegation's full support and cooperation with the hope that all future Presidents will follow her example of prudent and impartial leadership.

We share the desire voiced by many other colleagues of bringing the CD back to fulfil its objectives at the disposal of the international community. This goal has become all too significant in view of the fundamental security challenges the world is currently confronting. The past year's work in the CD emphasized the fact that the CD remains relevant and that structured debate over different issues is still valid. We express our confidence in the work of the coordinators designated by the Presidents, and we hope that their work will bring to the surface the priorities for the CD's work.

(Mr. Levanon, Israel)

My delegation joined the consensus on the adoption of the CD's agenda in parallel with the adoption of the Presidential declaration that allows for every CD member to raise any security issue relevant to the work of the Conference. We chose to do so notwithstanding our strong belief that the CD's current agenda does not appropriately reflect a realistic effort to address today's security challenges.

The CD is the only multilateral forum designated by the international community to address issues of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. Yet it is still entangled in attempts to address long-term objectives without giving due consideration to more realistic short-term objectives aimed at discerning the most urgent and imminent threats to international security and stability.

Israel is not opposed to setting such long-term goals, but at the same time, it is clear that striving to achieve long-term goals without first identifying and addressing the present threats is ineffective. It is only when current threats are properly addressed that we can seriously engage in dealing with our shared prospective goals of creating a safer world for all. In other words, it is incumbent upon the members to work jointly towards creating the conditions conducive to general and complete disarmament.

In our view, there are two fundamental threats to global peace and security that deserve to be placed as the highest priorities of the CD: the threat of terrorism in all its dimensions, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. This year, the risks to international peace and stability due to these two threats have reached unprecedented levels. Failure to find a suitable answer to these threats could, and probably will, result in a substantial deterioration of individual, regional and global security.

The international community has taken some measures to prevent arms from reaching terrorists. Yet those measures are limited in scope and further efforts must be exerted. The international community has already acknowledged the problem of illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons by agreeing on a set of measures set out in the United Nations Programme of Action in July 2001. The inability of the Review Conference held last July to agree on a final document should be perceived as a reiteration of the commitment to implement the United Nations Programme of Action, and the international community should continue to work towards reducing the dangers of this phenomenon. For Israel, the problem of illicit transfers of SALW is one of the most dangerous and destabilizing features of our day-to-day reality, which clearly presents an opportunity for the Programme of Action to be implemented in our region.

Recently, the issue of arms transfers to terrorists has taken on even more of a critically strategic nature in view of the quality, quantity and sophistication of the arms that continue to flow to terrorists, which has long exceeded SALW. The risk of terrorist organizations acquiring MANPADS, as well as rockets and sophisticated missiles, is an imminent threat to security and stability. But such organizations are not operating in a vacuum - they are supported by States that allow those arms to reach their hands. This has been well demonstrated in the case of the active support given by Syria to Hizbullah. Israel believes that the CD, among the other relevant international forums, is an appropriate medium to deal with this issue and to provide a platform for future international arrangements to prevent arms proliferation to terrorists.

(Mr. Levanon, Israel)

As I mentioned earlier, the second issue which needs strong and decisive action by the international community is the conduct of States developing weapons of mass destruction, with complete disregard for their international obligations. This has been coupled with an aggressive effort to concurrently develop the means of delivery.

In an effort to lead by example in the field of conventional arms, Israel has initiated its new export control legislation, which applies stringent export controls on any security item as well as dual-use equipment. More broadly, in the context of WMD proliferation, unlike other States in the region, Israel has signed both the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Additionally, Israel has expressed its support to the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and has recently supported the Global Threat Reduction Initiative. Israel has also endorsed and launched the ratification process of the upgraded international Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

Israel has been taking decisive action in the field of non-proliferation. Some recent measures include Israel's intensive internal inter-agency process that has yielded the consolidation of its legal framework into practical adherence to Nuclear Suppliers Group guidelines, in addition to its already formal adherence to the Australia Group and Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) guidelines.

In this vein, Israel welcomes United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 and its extension, 1673, calling for measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring WMD capabilities. We believe that these resolutions will contribute significantly to non-proliferation efforts. Furthermore, on 28 December 2006, Israel signed the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The signature of this Convention is part of the multifaceted approach taken by the Government of Israel in its efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms. Moreover, it is consistent with a general reform in Israel's export control legislation, based on the Wassenaar Arrangement principles.

During the general debate, a few delegations expressed their desire to discuss the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East. Israel supports the eventual establishment of such a zone, as has been demonstrated by our joining of the consensus resolution in the United Nations General Assembly First Committee under this same title. Naturally, we remain committed to the vision of the Middle East developing into a zone free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as ballistic missiles.

Yet we are also realistic enough to know that the Middle East, as had been the case in virtually every other region, such a region cannot be advanced out of context. I agree with my German colleague that an NWFZ can only emerge as an outgrowth of a fundamental transformation of the regional political-strategic climate through a gradual process of building trust and reconciliation, followed by more modest arms control measures. Regrettably, such transformation has thus far eluded the Middle East, as it is undermined by the actions and policies of other States in the region.

(Mr. Levanon, Israel)

Since the entry into force of the NPT, four significant cases of non-compliance have been formally acknowledged by IAEA. Three of them took place in our region, in States that do not recognize Israel, one of which still calls openly for our elimination.

As clearly documented in the IAEA reports and again recently by the IAEA Director General, Iran continues, regardless of the Security Council resolutions, to develop its nuclear programme and at the same time develop the means of medium- and long-range delivery.

Moreover, Iran is a source of proliferation for sensitive components of conventional and WMD programmes. It also openly arms and supports terrorist organizations, first and foremost Hizbullah. Noteworthy is the fact that Iran is actively assisted in this sponsorship by Syria. While both these countries continue to act in defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter - one in disregard of United Nations Security Council resolution 1737 and 1696, the other in clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 - the international community cannot remain indifferent to this dangerous proliferation of arms.

A sober and clear-headed response to this dangerous spectrum of threats must be implemented. Attempts to disregard reality and to delay the implementation of the necessary measures have proven to be the wrong approach.

Let me conclude by saying that in order for us here in the CD to move towards more ambitious long-term goals, we must work first to create the conditions conducive for the security of all. This process must be incremental as to initially addressing the more real and current threats to international peace and security, namely the proliferation of WMD, as well as the threat of international terrorism.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Israel for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ms. Darlow of New Zealand.

Ms. DARLOW (New Zealand): I should like to take this opportunity today during the formal plenary meeting to address the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Preventing the weaponization of outer space is fundamental to safeguarding our ability to access space resources, both now and in the future. It is in all our collective interests to preserve space for the development of peaceful technologies and scientific exploration.

The preservation of a weapon-free space is rightly a core issue for this Conference. It is highly relevant for all States, including those like mine without space programmes. The commercial and scientific applications of outer space are continually expanding for an increasingly diverse range of functions - from communications to climate change monitoring. We must ensure that future opportunities for peaceful development are not compromised by militarization.

(Ms. Darlow, New Zealand)

In this regard, New Zealand was concerned to learn that China had undertaken an anti-satellite test with no advance notification - the first such test in 20 years. We are disappointed that transparency and confidence-building measures such as those we have been discussing in this very forum do not appear to have been observed. New Zealand remains strongly opposed to any attempts to militarize outer space.

A useful outcome to our discussions during the informal segments devoted to this issue would be to evaluate prospects for a more comprehensive legal framework regulating the demilitarization of space. Canada circulated a very useful working paper during last year's debate, which aimed to identify gaps in the existing legal systems. In our view, this might provide a good starting point from which to explore whether there is agreement on the existing gaps before proceeding to debate on how best to fill them. Russia and China have also done some very useful work in this regard, and we thank them for the updated version of their compilation, which was circulated this morning.

Arguments that there is no current arms race in space, and therefore no need to address this issue, ignore the preventative benefits that adopting a precautionary approach might provide.

We have observed before in this forum that precedent exists for creating an overarching legal framework for peaceful uses in the creation of the Antarctic Treaty in 1961. A key consideration for participating States in that process was the judgement that the potential benefits for the global community in terms of peaceful uses and scientific research which could be carried out on that continent under an agreed international treaty regime outweighed any narrow benefits to individual States which could have been accrued through weaponization or military deployment by those States.

In our view, this represents a parallel set of conditions as should exist in our consideration of measures to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of New Zealand for her statement, and I would now like to give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Prasad of India.

Mr. PRASAD (India): Mr. President, first, allow me to say that we are most happy to see you in the Chair. Over the past week, in accordance with the organizational framework for the first part of the 2007 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we have undertaken useful discussions on agenda items 1 and 2, both in the plenary held on 6 February and thereafter in six informal meetings. In this connection, I should like to express my delegation's appreciation for the initiative taken by the collective presidencies of the Conference for this year. In particular, we would like to compliment Ambassador Mtshali, as the first and incumbent President. The three distinguished coordinators who have presided over the informal meetings on agenda items 1, 2 and 3, Ambassador Strømme, Ambassador Trezza and Ambassador Meyer, also deserve our commendation for conducting the respective proceedings in an exemplary way, which is a good augury for the work of the Conference this year.

The discussions last week reflected the resolve of United Nations Member States, contained in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the United Nations Millennium Declaration, that nuclear disarmament is the most critical issue on the global disarmament agenda and that our ultimate goal is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

While maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrent, India continues to be committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. India's responsible nuclear doctrine is based on no first use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapons States. The doctrine also reaffirms India's readiness to join multilateral negotiations for the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. India has continued to observe a moratorium on nuclear explosive tests. We are ready to participate in negotiations in the Conference on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

During the course of the informal discussions, we have spelt out India's specific proposals to build a consensus that strengthens the ability of the international community to move towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. The proposals presented have already been reflected in the non-paper on agenda item 1, compiled by Ambassador Strømmen, that lists and clusters all concrete proposals for substantive issues that require more focused attention during the second part of the annual session, with a view to the commencement of negotiations.

In order to facilitate the further consideration of practical steps for progressive and systematic efforts to attain the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war, I am separately requesting the Conference secretariat to circulate to members of the Conference the text of India's working paper on nuclear disarmament presented on 6 October 2006 at the First Committee of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. This will facilitate further discussions on agenda items 1 and 2 in the forthcoming meetings of the Conference.

We have gained from the format of the discussions, which have been held mostly in an informal setting. This has allowed for a freer exchange of ideas, besides providing greater clarity on the agenda issues that lie before us. India will remain engaged, together with other delegations, in seeking ways to begin substantive work on all the principal issues on the agenda of the Conference in a manner that takes into account the concerns and priorities of its constituents and secures their support. We are hopeful that the recommendations and proposals presented by the member States and our further deliberations will contribute to an agreement on the programme of work of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of India for his statement and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ms. Janjua of Pakistan.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan): Mr. President, we are delighted to see you chairing the CD debate on the important questions of PAROS and NSAs. Our statement today will focus on PAROS. We intend to speak on NSAs next week.

(Mr. Janjua, Pakistan)

Yesterday in the informal discussions we outlined our position on the issue of PAROS. We thank Ambassador Meyer for conducting these discussions. We will today briefly reiterate the key principles that we stated yesterday.

The growing dependence of the international community on space for economic development and for security underscores the importance of the peaceful uses of outer space. The immense potential of space in communication technologies and their impact on the lives of people in the remotest parts of the world is one clear example of the peaceful uses of space for the benefit of all. It is in the common interest of mankind to explore and use outer space for peaceful purposes.

The United Nations Charter obligates us not to use or threaten to use force in international relations. This obligation includes activities in space.

Concerns about the weaponization of outer space are growing. The consequences of placing weapons in outer space, if we fail to prevent weaponization, are immense. We believe that measures to prevent an arms race in outer space would help avert a serious danger to global peace and security.

The CD is the sole negotiating disarmament forum and has the primary responsibility to negotiate and conclude a multilateral treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, of which we celebrate the 40th anniversary this year, and other multilateral agreements do not fully include and address the gravity of the issue. These instruments also do not reflect advances in space technology.

We share the majority's conclusion that the Conference must respond to and fill the gap in existing international legal instruments, which are inadequate to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

We take this opportunity to thank China and Russia for the third revised and amended version of the compilation of comments and suggestions on the CD PAROS working paper (CD/1679). We are convinced that this updated inclusive document will help us move forward on discussions on PAROS. The documentation available to the CD on PAROS is impressive. This has been largely due to the commitment and continued efforts on trying to move discussions forward by China and Russia. This has also been possible thanks to papers that have been presented by Canada.

Work in the CD and in the seminars held in and outside the CD, especially through UNIDIR, are ample evidence of the importance and gravity of the issue. They also provide sufficient material to commence negotiations on PAROS, once we finalize the programme of work of the Conference. In this regard, the A-5 proposal remains a valid basis for the CD's balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

(Mr. Janjua, Pakistan)

United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/58 has once again called on the CD to establish an ad hoc committee and negotiate a multilateral agreement on PAROS. The outline of a treaty presented by the Russian delegation today is a clear illustration on what this treaty may look like.

It is our obligation to respond to the United Nations General Assembly resolution's call to start work in all earnest on PAROS.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Pakistan for her statement, and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Shoukry of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt): Egypt has consistently exhibited a notable concern over the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space. It has consistently advocated that the exploration of and use of outer space should solely be directed to peaceful purposes and carried out for the benefit of mankind and in the interest of all States, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development. Our conviction emanates from a solid belief that preventing an arms race in outer space would undoubtedly avert any danger to international peace and security. During the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, Egypt introduced resolution 61/58, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", a yearly resolution submitted in rotation with Sri Lanka. We are pleased that 178 Member States of the United Nations voted in favour of this resolution.

Egypt reaffirms the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space and expresses its readiness to contribute to this common objective. We reiterate our recognition that although the current regime applicable to outer space plays an important role in that environment, there is nevertheless a need to consolidate and reinforce that legal regime and enhance its effectiveness, as it does not fully guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space and its weaponization. Consequently, we believe that negotiation for the conclusion of an international, comprehensive and legally binding agreement that tackles the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space remains an essential objective. Such an agreement would unquestionably fill the existing gap which the current legal regime lacks. In the meantime, however, it is imperative that strict compliance be exercised with already existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space, whether bilateral or multilateral agreements. In this respect, I would like to highlight that paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly stated that in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, further measures and appropriate international negotiations should be undertaken. Furthermore, numerous General Assembly resolutions have invited the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space with a view to conducting negotiations for the conclusion of a multilateral agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We believe that such a step would be a positive way forward.

Given the evident growing use of outer space, there is accordingly a growing need for increased transparency and information-sharing on the part of the international community, particularly from those States with space capabilities. General Assembly resolution 61/75 clearly emphasizes the increasing need for transparency and confidence-building measures in outer

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

space activities as a means conducive to ensuring the attainment of the objective of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We call upon all States, and in particular those with major space capabilities, to exhibit greater transparency in their outer space activities so as to positively contribute to the overall objective of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and preventing an arms race. We also urge them to refrain from taking any actions that would be contrary to that objective and to other relevant existing treaties in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation.

In conclusion, Egypt would like to emphasize the mutually complementary nature of bilateral and multilateral efforts in the field of preventing an arms race in outer space and hope that concrete results will emerge from those efforts as soon as possible. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. The delegation of Egypt will spare no effort to support any serious attempts towards achieving this objective.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Egypt for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Shein of Myanmar.

Mr. SHEIN (Myanmar): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to felicitate South Africa warmly on its assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. At the same time, I also wish to express my delegation's sincere appreciation for the initiative which the P-6 presented to the CD in order to provide a way forward in our work. I would like to assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation in the discharge of your functions.

Today, my delegation would like to present our views on agenda item 1 of the CD, namely, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament".

Myanmar is strongly supportive of nuclear disarmament. We fully align ourselves with the chapter entitled "Disarmament and international security" contained in the Final Document of the fourteenth summit of the NAM held in Havana last September, and in particular with the NAM's principled position on nuclear disarmament, which remains its highest priority on the international arms control agenda.

Nuclear weapons impinge on the security of all nations. The continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use poses a grave danger to mankind. My delegation reiterates its firm belief that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against a nuclear disaster.

The resolution on nuclear disarmament tabled by my country, with the support of and co-sponsorship of many NAM countries, was adopted again by the General Assembly at its sixty-first session last December, resolution 61/79, with an overwhelming affirmative vote. The resolution is comprehensive in scope and encompasses crucial interim steps for reducing the danger of nuclear weapons. It also calls on the CD to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate a phased programme of nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Shein, Myanmar)

While we recognize the importance of bilateral negotiations among the nuclear-weapon States, we believe that the Conference should commence multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament at an early date. In this context, my delegation fully supports the proposal of the G-21, as contained in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571. We concur with the delegations calling for the CD to revisit this proposal.

Myanmar reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are interrelated and mutually reinforcing and that efforts aiming at non-proliferation should be parallel to simultaneous efforts aiming at nuclear disarmament.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we should aim, inter alia, at pursuing efforts on the following measures: the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to NNWS; the encouragement of nations to accede to the NPT, which is a cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and the essential foundation for achieving nuclear disarmament; strict compliance with the provisions of the NPT by States party to the Treaty; the reaffirmation and implementation of the unequivocal undertaking by the NWS to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament by the full implementation of the 13 practical steps; the entry into force of the CTBT; the establishment and strengthening of nuclear-weapon-free zones; and the recognition and encouragement of unilateral measures taken by NWS for nuclear arms limitation and to urge them to take further steps in this regard.

In our view, these represent some practical important measures contributing towards nuclear disarmament.

As a State party to the NPT, Myanmar regrets the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. We are looking forward to working together with all States party to the Treaty at the first session of the Preparatory Committee meeting in 2007 in a constructive manner in order to ensure the successful outcome of the 2010 Review Conference.

We find that the three informal meetings we had on agenda item 1 last week, under the coordinatorship of Ambassador Strømme of Norway, were highly beneficial and informative.

Through the deliberations, substantive issues that require more focused attention with a view to commencing negotiations have been identified and compiled by the coordinator. We need and hope to build on this in the next phase of our work. My delegation would like to thank Ambassador Strømme for his experience and wisdom in conducting the meetings successfully.

My delegation expresses its hope that the CD can arrive at a decision to commence negotiations at an early date on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Myanmar for his statement and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair, and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Mr. Ali of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. ALI (Syrian Arab Republic) (spoke in Arabic): First, allow me, Mr. President, to express our happiness at seeing you preside over our work today.

This week the CD will hold informal meetings on two subjects: negative security assurances and prevention of an arms race in outer space. My delegation would like to reiterate our position on both items.

With regard to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, Syria was one of the States to sponsor the Sino-Russian working paper contained in document CD/1679 dated 28 June 2002. The document sets out the main elements of an international convention on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the use or threat of use of force against objects in outer space. In this context, we reiterate our full support for the contributions subsequently made by the delegations of the Russian Federation and China and also reiterate our support for the statement made by the Russian delegation today. We believe that a new agreement on preventing an arms race in outer space is of the utmost urgency to mankind. The establishment of an ad hoc committee of the CD to discuss this issue is the minimum we should seek to achieve.

With regard to the second subject, negative security assurances, we would like to focus on the following points.

First, we are confident that the NPT remains one of the cornerstone treaties in the field of disarmament. The adherence of the majority of States in the world to this treaty is proof of its importance in dispelling the spectre of nuclear war.

Second, achieving the universality of the treaty is a moral and political obligation for States parties, especially nuclear-weapon States. This universality has not been achieved in the Middle East because of one State, namely Israel.

Third, we are convinced that the best guarantee of the non-use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. In this connection, delays in beginning negotiations on nuclear disarmament have become a real obstacle to confidence-building with regard to non-nuclear-weapon States. The fact that nuclear States hold on to and develop their arsenals is a threat not only to the non-proliferation regime but also to international peace and security, because, by maintaining their nuclear weapons, these States can use or threaten to use these weapons.

It follows that the delivery of security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States by nuclear-weapon States, in accordance with a legally binding instrument, is a right of non-nuclear-weapon States and a legal and moral obligation binding on nuclear States. The provision of unconditional negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States is an integral part of the agreement that was reached at the two NPT review conferences held, respectively, in 1995 and 2000.

Here my delegation would like to express its support for the statement made by the distinguished representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union, indicating that negative security assurances are a real guarantee of non-proliferation. We also welcome the support given by the European Union for the creation of a zone free of weapons, especially

(Mr. Ali, Syrian Arab Republic)

nuclear weapons, in the Middle East. In this context we reiterate our previous position, expressed in the Group of 21 proposals contained in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571, concerning the necessity of establishing an ad hoc committee of the CD to negotiate on a convention offering effective guarantees to non-nuclear States against the use or threat of use of such weapons against those States.

Before concluding my statement, I should like to comment on what the delegate of Israel said, and I should like to express my surprise at the courage of the distinguished representative of Israel. It really takes tremendous courage for a representative of Israel to talk about terrorism. The most dangerous terrorist group in the world is the one governing in Tel Aviv. Opinion polls, even here in Europe, show that, in spite of the media blackout with regard to Israel's crimes, Israel poses the gravest threat to international peace and security. There is no crime under international law, international humanitarian laws, or international norms that Israel has not committed in Palestine, Lebanon and occupied Syrian territory. As for national resistance movements in Palestine and Lebanon, they act according to international law, since they are resisting occupation. Without the occupation there would be no resistance.

If we want to talk about terrorism, then we all know what happened last summer in Lebanon. After a purely military occupation, in which the Lebanese national resistance captured two Israeli soldiers on the battlefield, Israel launched a barbaric assault on Lebanon, attacking its towns and villages using all kinds of weapons. The most recent reports of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations show that Israel used 4 million cluster bombs. For those who do not know the size of the population of Lebanon, we should like to tell them that there was over one Israeli cluster bomb for each and every citizen of Lebanon. A simple comparison of the results of the war, as far as victims are concerned, shows that the Israeli side had about 150 victims, 90 per cent of them military combatants. By contrast, over 1,000 Lebanese were killed, 90 per cent of them civilians and over half of them children. I will leave it to you to decide who practises terrorism and who should be prevented from obtaining weapons.

The Israeli delegation also spoke of ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons. It said the issue was tied to change in the political and strategic situation. Of course, we are trying to change the situation, meaning that we are trying, in accordance with international law, to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian territory. This is the change we seek. Here, in this forum, I invite the Israeli representative to declare on behalf of his country that he will abide by international resolutions and will implement Security Council resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which call on Israel to withdraw from the Arab occupied territories.

The representative of Israel said that Syria violates certain resolutions. Here, on behalf of Syria, I should like to say that we are committed to implementing all resolutions of international legitimacy and that we will respect them. Again, I invite the representative of Israel to make the same declaration, to say that Israel will implement all resolutions of international legitimacy. If he cannot do so, he should reconsider his position as a representative of the terrorist group that is governing in Tel Aviv.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement, and I would now like to give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Shoukry of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to make another statement, in terms of security assurances.

Egypt strongly believes that effective security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons lies in complete nuclear disarmament, a noble and much-needed objective which has yet to be realized. Achieving complete nuclear disarmament will by consequence provide the most valuable security guarantee, offering an extraordinary contribution to the preservation of international peace and security. By achieving nuclear disarmament, we would in effect erase the entire rationale and *raison d'être* for providing security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

But in the meantime, the harsh and disturbing reality is that thousands of nuclear weapons still exist today, continuing to haunt us, ultimately forcing States that do not possess these destructive weapons to engage in a legitimate quest to guarantee their protection and safety by receiving effective security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Egypt reaffirms that pending the achievement of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, there is a pressing need to reach early agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The issue of effective security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons has been frequently addressed in several international forums, including the International Court of Justice, the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. Egypt recalls the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use by a State of nuclear weapons in armed conflict, which stated that there is in neither customary nor conventional international law any specific authorization of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, and that a threat or use of force by means of nuclear weapons that is contrary to Article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter, and that fails to meet all the requirements of Article 51, is unlawful. We also recall paragraph 59 of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, in which it urged the nuclear-weapon States to pursue efforts to conclude, as appropriate, effective arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) also reaffirmed that “further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons” and that “these steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument”. We also note Security Council resolution 255 adopted on 19 June 1968 and resolution 984 on 11 April 1995, which addressed the issue of effective security assurances.

Although Egypt takes note of and welcomes unilateral declarations made by some nuclear-weapon States that provide security assurances against the use of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapon States, we believe that these declarations fall short of our security

(Mr. Shoukry, Egypt)

requirements and do not adequately or conclusively deal with the issue. For security assurances to be effective, they must be unconditional, comprehensive, legally binding and negotiated multilaterally.

We also have difficulty grasping the argument that security assurances are already being provided to NPT States parties through protocols to nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties. This argument raises an important concern, however, since the record of signature and ratification by the nuclear-weapons States to protocols of existing nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties granting security assurances does not reflect much enthusiasm. Consequently, we believe that there is a pressing need to start negotiations on a multilateral and legally binding instrument to provide non-nuclear-weapon States with such comprehensive assurances as soon as possible.

Egypt strongly believes that efforts to conclude a universal and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued. We consider the conclusion of such an agreement an important step towards achieving an effective regime of non-proliferation in all its aspects as well as nuclear disarmament. The latest General Assembly resolution, 61/57, recommends that the Conference on Disarmament actively continue intensive negotiations with a view to reaching early agreement and concluding effective international agreements to assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, taking into account the widespread support for the conclusion of an international convention. The delegation of Egypt will spare no effort to support any serious attempts towards achieving this objective.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Egypt for his statement, and I would now like to give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Rocca of the United States of America.

Ms. ROCCA (United States of America): I take the floor today to contribute to the discussion on the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS). Let me begin by saying a few words about United States' space policy, about which much has been said - much of it inaccurate - and how United States' space policy relates to efforts on the part of a few to prevent an arms race that does not exist. The United States' space policy articulates a number of substantive objectives: the primary one is to ensure that we maintain and enable free access to and use of space for peaceful purposes for the United States and all nations of the world - and for the benefit of all mankind. Our policy also mandates the pursuit of programmes and capabilities to ensure that our space assets are protected. Put simply, these assets are vital to our national security, including our economic interests, and must be defended. Similar concerns were raised by our colleagues here yesterday.

As a number of our colleagues have pointed out, there already exists a number of treaties and conventions that establish a regime for the peaceful use of outer space. We note that many nations represented here within the CD itself have not signed on to all these conventions. We believe the universalization of these conventions is a much more practical and effective step towards guaranteeing the peaceful use of outer space.

(Ms. Rocca, United States)

And indeed, we must be very concerned about the emerging threats to our space assets. This emerging threat applies to all spacefaring nations. It is of special note given the outcome of the intentional destruction of a satellite on 11 January. The United States has already expressed its concerns about this event, but it is appropriate to comment about the 11 January event here because of the long-standing proposals made in this forum for an international legal agreement on, among other things, the prevention of the threat or use of force against space objects. The United States confirmed through its space tracking sensors that the 11 January event created hundreds of pieces of large orbital debris, the majority of which will stay in orbit for more than 100 years. A much larger number of smaller, but still hazardous, pieces of debris were also created.

The United States is concerned about the increased risk to human space flight and space infrastructure as a result of this action, a risk that is shared by all spacefaring nations. The United States and many other nations have satellites in space in conformity with international agreements that provide for their national security, and foreign policy and economic interests.

There is an inherent contradiction between the political efforts in this Conference vis-à-vis outer space, as well as the work on mitigation of space debris in the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and the Inter-agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, on the one hand, and the action taken on 11 January. Indeed, the avoidance of the intentional creation of long-lived space debris is one of the points included in the debris mitigation guidelines that the COPUOS science and technology subcommittee plans to adopt this year. All spacefaring nations deserve an explanation for the discrepancy between these international endeavours and the action taken on 11 January.

The test of an anti-satellite (or ASAT) weapon reminds us that a relatively small number of countries are exploring and acquiring capabilities to counter, attack, and defeat vital space systems, including those of the United States. These capabilities include jamming satellite links or blinding satellite sensors, which can be disruptive or can temporarily deny access to space-derived products. Kinetic and conventional ASAT weapons - or electromagnetic pulse weapons - can permanently and irreversibly damage and destroy a satellite and create vast amounts of orbital debris.

Just as the United States reserves the right to protect its infrastructures and resources on land, so too do we reserve the right to protect our space assets. This principle was first established for the United States by President Eisenhower and is enshrined in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. Consistent with this principle, the United States views the purposeful interference with its space systems as an infringement on our rights, just as we would view interference with United States naval and commercial vessels in international waters as an infringement on our rights.

I want to emphasize that, by maintaining the right of self-defence, the United States is not out to claim space for its own or to weaponize it. Our policy is not about establishing a United States monopoly of space, as some have asserted. Even a cursory reading of our new space policy statement demonstrates just the opposite. There is significant emphasis on international cooperation throughout our national space policy. International cooperation is

(Ms. Rocca, United States)

identified as both a United States policy principle and goal. International cooperation is also emphasized in the other related policy directives, such as President Bush's Commercial Remote Sensing Space Policy and the January 2004 Vision for Space Exploration. This embracing of international partnerships reflects the United States policy of pursuing scientific, economic, and international cooperation based on participants' capabilities, expertise, and interest. This approach has led to a high degree of cooperation between our National Aeronautic and Space Administration and its international partners, many of whom are represented here in the CD, a result we view as very positive.

Critics, however, like to claim that our national space policy ignores or downplays United States international legal obligations and that the Administration's opposition to space arms control may spur an arms race in space. Let me state it clearly and to the point: the President's space policy does not advocate nor direct the development or deployment of weapons in space.

Nonetheless, we are told that there must be a ban to prevent weapons in space. We have some experience in this regard. For many years the United States engaged in such talks with the Soviet Union to no avail, largely because no one then, or now for that matter, could formulate an agreed definition of what is meant by "space weapon". What is often meant is whatever the United States may be exploring in terms of ballistic missile defences in space, but not weapons on the ground that would attack satellites in space. And without a definition, one is left with loopholes and meaningless limitations that endanger national security.

Some assert that the recent test of an ASAT weapon, which has drawn so much international attention and concern, constitutes a further reason to pursue outer space arms control, as some have proposed. The United States submits that they have drawn the wrong conclusion. It is regrettable that some countries' attempts to link important issues, like the fissile material cut-off treaty and PAROS, have contributed to tying up movement in the CD for years. It is also regrettable that China has conducted this ASAT demonstration, endangering hundreds of satellites with the resulting debris. And it is regrettable that China continues to call for an arms control arrangement which, if its recent behaviour is any indication, would not ban its ASAT activities nor address the fears its actions have stoked. The system that was tested 11 January was not based in space, but launched from the ground. PAROS, as we have usually discussed it in this Conference, would not ban such a weapon. Indeed, China has claimed that this ASAT weapon test was consistent with long-standing support for PAROS. Despite the ASAT test, we continue to believe that there is no arms race in space, and therefore no problem for arms control to solve.

Some say that outer space arms control should be extended to ban all ASATs, including those terrestrially based, but years of discussions in this area have also failed. In the 1970s, the United States engaged in ASAT arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. They failed for a number of reasons, including the determination that effectively verifying compliance was unattainable due to definitional problems and the difficulty of determining what constitutes an ASAT. Negotiations became stymied over questions related to which so-called "space weapons" capabilities should be limited - co-orbital interceptors, direct-ascent interceptors, ground-based, or just space-based directed-energy systems. The Soviet Union wanted to define the

(Ms. Rocca, United States)

United States space shuttle as an ASAT weapon and ban it. It was also recognized that satellites already on orbit are capable of being manoeuvred to destroy satellites simply by physically colliding with them. Beyond these issues of definition and scope, it became clear that there was an unacceptable risk of “breakout” from the agreement from which the States parties could not rapidly recover.

In the 1980s, the United States again examined the feasibility of ASAT arms control and found it wanting. A third United States Administration in the mid-1990s declined to negotiate a legally binding agreement on outer space arms control here in the CD because, as we have made clear many times, the existing legal regime is sufficient.

Central to the existing legal regime is the Outer Space Treaty, drafted almost 40 years ago. A quick look at some of the Treaty’s key provisions shows that, with the advent of commercial space activities, this document has become even more applicable today than when it was first drafted. Encompassed within the Outer Space Treaty are the guiding principles for space operations by which all nations should conduct themselves.

These principles include, for instance, that space shall be free for all to explore and use; space activities shall be carried out in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, which guarantees the right of self-defence; and States parties bear responsibility for the activities carried on by governmental and non-governmental entities. The Treaty also prohibits placing weapons of mass destruction in orbit and prohibits the parties from interfering with the assets of other parties. We note in particular the importance of this non-interference provision in light of the recent ASAT weapon test.

Beyond the Outer Space Treaty, the United States is also party to a number of conventions designed to provide for cooperation in space and to promote an understanding of the responsibilities associated with being a spacefaring nation. These include: the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects; the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space; the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space; and the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC).

Despite this long-standing and effective international space treaty regime, centred on the Outer Space Treaty, there are those who advocate negotiating new multilateral agreements that we believe to be unnecessary and even counterproductive. We do not need to enter into new agreements. Rather, we should be seeking to gain universal adherence to, and compliance with, existing agreements.

We should focus our efforts on ensuring free access to space for peaceful purposes and deterring and dissuading the misuse of space, seeking universal adherence to the existing treaties and conventions to which not all members are signed up to. This is precisely what the United States national space policy states. We believe this approach will have more of a deterrent and dissuasion effect than an additional set of international constraints - constraints that would be unverifiable, protect no one, and constrain only those who comply and not those who cheat.

(Ms. Rocca, United States)

In closing, let me say that our interest is to continue to expand the use of space for peaceful purposes. Our advances in space in the fields of communication, medicine, and transportation, as well as many other areas, have come to benefit all of mankind, including citizens of countries that have not yet ventured into space. For the United States, that means continuing our tradition of pursuing diplomatic efforts to gain the broadest possible appreciation for the benefits that all nations receive from the peaceful uses of outer space.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States of America for her statement, and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Tarui of Japan.

Mr. TARUI (Japan): In relation to the topic of today's formal plenary, Japan basically lends support to the idea of preventing an arms race in outer space. Moreover, we are actively working for the peaceful use of space. In this connection, Japan has submitted reports to the United Nations Secretary-General in accordance with the requirements set out in the United Nations General Assembly resolution on confidence-building in outer space. Japan hopes that our discussions during this year's CD session will be as valuable as those carried out last year.

Whether it be "weaponization" or "space objects", the core concepts of PAROS are vague and obscure. Due to this vague nature, the Ad Hoc Committee which between 1985 and 1994 was tasked with addressing PAROS produced no substantial results as agreement could not be reached among the countries on the definition of "space weapons" or ASATs. As the definitions still remain vague, it would be therefore considerably difficult to negotiate a treaty, since it is unclear what obligations would be imposed on the States parties. On the other hand, we are confident that under the able guidance of the coordinator for agenda item 3, there will be very fruitful discussions this year to overcome these difficulties.

A vast number of satellites have been launched into outer space for a multitude of purposes, such as communication, earth observation, navigation and other beneficial functions. These satellites play an indispensable role for humanity and have made an immeasurable difference to the safety and the welfare of all members of the international community.

From the perspective of the safe use of outer space and national security, Japan would like to raise its concern in relation to the recent Chinese anti-satellite test. We have sought an explanation from the Chinese Government about the facts and intentions of their act, but as yet, China's explanation has not dispelled the concerns of the international community, including Japan. We seek a prompt provision of information on this matter.

In 2002, China, in cooperation with the Russian Federation, circulated as an official document of the CD possible elements for a future PAROS treaty, which as a basic obligation proposed a prohibition on the use of force against outer space objects. Taking into account that the recent test by the Chinese Government can be considered to violate its own proposal, we would like an explanation on this point.

(Mr. Tarui, Japan)

Even though the recent test brought about the destruction of China's own satellite, this action may also adversely affect the satellites and space activities of other spacefaring nations. Consequently, as the facts related to this situation are revealed in due course, it could be inconsistent with the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty.

Through the cooperation of each country, substantial deliberations have been accomplished in COPUOS to reduce the amount of space debris in order to create a safer operating environment for outer space activities. It is thus regrettable that the creation of space debris by the Chinese Government's recent anti-satellite test, which could seriously damage the satellites in orbit of other nations, goes against all our cooperative efforts and the assertions of China itself.

Japan requests China to display greater transparency in its outer space activities, as well as its military activities as a whole.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Japan for his statement, and I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ambassador Millar of Australia.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): Australia welcomes the discussions this week on the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space. Australia has been a consistent supporter of the annual General Assembly resolution on this issue. We firmly believe that all nations should have unhindered access to space for peaceful purposes. And that States should avoid taking actions that could endanger the manned and unmanned space assets of other countries or put the peaceful use of space at risk.

In this regard, Australia expresses concern over China's anti-satellite test on 12 January. The test appears to have created a significant amount of debris with the potential to endanger the manned and unmanned space assets of other countries, including Australia. The debate on PAROS this week provides an opportunity for China to provide information on its actions to the international community.

Bearing in mind the provisions of article IX of the Outer Space Treaty, we would be interested in learning of any prior assessment China made of the consequences of its actions for the space assets of other countries. We would also be interested in China's intentions regarding any future deployment of weapon systems with the capability of destroying space assets.

Australia sees the debate this week as an opportunity to further our understanding of key definitional issues relating to the peaceful use of outer space. And it is an opportunity for the Conference to clarify ideas such as confidence-building measures in outer space. It is our hope that through this work, we will be better able to judge the most appropriate means of safeguarding the peaceful use of outer space for the benefit of all nations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Australia for her statement, and I would now like to call on Ambassador Meyer of Canada.

Mr. MEYER (Canada): I am delivering this statement regarding PAROS in my national capacity.

In the context of our discussions on PAROS this week, Canada would like to take this opportunity to recall the relevant points of our response to United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/66, entitled “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities”, which we are arranging to have circulated as an official CD document.

Outer space is playing an increasingly important role in people’s daily lives. This is why our use of outer space, from the simplest to the most complex of activities, must be conducted in a manner compatible with the peaceful use of outer space as well as in the interests of and for the benefit of all States.

It is incumbent upon us therefore to preserve this vital domain for the future of humanity by making the most effective use of the tools we have. We must also continue the ongoing work towards developing new tools, which will allow us to better reach the goal of preserving outer space for future generations.

Canada is convinced that transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities can contribute to reducing threat perceptions and augmenting security among States.

Some examples are:

Regulations for space traffic management could be developed through various international pre-notification processes. Detailed pre-launch notifications, notifications of orbital change and pre-atmospheric re-entry notifications could also constitute ways to enhance transparency and contribute to the building of confidence.

The adoption of guidelines on reducing the production of space debris, or space debris mitigation, also constitutes, in our view, a particularly useful mechanism for achieving these objectives. In the coming days, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) will consider the proposed guidelines for onward submission to the COPUOS plenary in June of this year. Canada will be working along with other States to ensure the adoption of the guidelines at the plenary as well as during the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly this fall.

With respect to increasing overall levels of space debris, the adoption of a multilateral moratorium on all testing of anti-satellite weapons is also, today more than ever, an urgent action to be undertaken. The end of anti-satellite weapons tests by the United States and the Soviet Union during the cold war is an excellent example of how voluntary actions by two countries resulted in increased levels of confidence. However, recent events have clearly shown the limits of unilateral voluntary measures taken on an informal basis between two States. Regrettably, the irresponsible action of one State can impact literally on the outer space interests of the entire international community.

(Mr. Meyer, Canada)

In conclusion, the increased international security that would flow from implementing instruments such as the ones I have just mentioned can only be realized if each one of us agrees to play by the rules. Confidence is built on the basis of predictability, and not surprises.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Canada for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Macedo of Mexico.

Mr. MACEDO (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): I have the honour to be taking the floor on behalf of the delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela and Mexico. In our dual capacity as States parties to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin American and the Caribbean (the Treaty of Tlatelolco) and as Latin American members of the Conference on Disarmament, we would like on this occasion to refer to the item relating to effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, that is, item 4 on the agenda adopted at the start of this session.

The very existence of nuclear weapons represents a threat to the security of mankind. Consequently the total elimination of such weapons is the sole absolute assurance against their use or the threat of their use. In this respect we would like to express our conviction that, until the total elimination of nuclear weapons has been achieved, efforts to conclude a legally binding universal and unconditional instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States must remain a priority.

Any presumption on the part of the nuclear-weapon States that they may continue to possess nuclear weapons indefinitely is incompatible with the integrity and sustainability of the nuclear non-proliferation regime in all its aspects, and with the broader objective of maintaining international peace and security.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are closely related to negative security assurances as a complement to the attainment of nuclear disarmament. They play an important role in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and extending the areas of the world which are free from nuclear weapons, contributing to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

In this respect we reiterate our call for the status of nuclear-weapon-free zones to be fully respected, in particular by the nuclear Powers. The potential risk of the use of nuclear weapons is such that the nuclear-weapon States should grant the non-nuclear-weapon States effective security assurances that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them. Hence the need for full and unconditional respect.

In this regard, we would recall that the nineteenth session of the General Conference of the Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), in resolution 477 of 8 November 2005, declared that in the current state of international law, the use of nuclear weapons in self-defence in response to an attack using conventional weapons cannot be endorsed by international law because it does not meet the requirement of necessity and is not proportionate to the purpose of the defensive action as recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

(Mr. Macedo, Mexico)

In the same resolution, the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco urged the nuclear-weapon States which, when ratifying Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, recorded unilateral interpretations which affect the denuclearized status laid down under the Treaty, to modify or withdraw their unilateral interpretations.

We appreciate the unequivocal response provided by the People's Republic of China on 11 November 2003, in which it stated that "as regards the security guarantee for nuclear-weapon-free countries, China has been committed from the day that it first obtained nuclear weapons to not be the first to use them at any time and under no circumstances. China has assumed the unconditional commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against those States or regions that are free of them".

This commitment, in accordance with the interpretation of the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, is based on the fact that the arguments used by the four other nuclear Powers, based on an interpretation of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter with respect to self-defence, are incompatible with the practice of the International Court of Justice, owing to the absence of the elements of proportionality and necessity.

Bearing in mind the experience of our region in this important area, which is related to disarmament and non-proliferation, we reiterate our interest in initiating and taking part in a debate within the Conference on Disarmament which would make it possible to identify the most appropriate means of gradually leading us to the eventual commencement of negotiations directed towards the drafting of an international instrument which would provide assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this respect, we will take an active part in the informal meetings convened on this item to be led by the distinguished representative of Brazil, Ambassador Carlos Paranhos.

Lastly, in my capacity as the representative of Mexico, and I am sure the others will endorse my words, I would like to mention that tomorrow, 14 February, will be a particularly important day for Latin America and the Caribbean, not because it is St. Valentine's day, but because we will be commemorating the 40th anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. There will be a meeting in Mexico City to commemorate this important date, with participation by Governments, well-known academics and experts. We will share the results with the Conference on Disarmament.

The regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco is now complete and in full force. We hope that the other nuclear-weapon-free zones will speedily achieve the same state in order to move forward towards the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Mexico for his statement that he delivered also on behalf of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

I now wish to give the floor to Ambassador Sajjadpour of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who has requested the floor in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. SAJJADPOUR (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation categorically rejects what was mentioned by the Israeli regime about my country. It is quite shocking that an entity which defies international law in its totality, intentionally ignores, rejects and ridicules United Nations General Assembly as well as Security Council resolutions, and for the last six decades occupies the territories of others, produces nuclear weapons and officially confesses to the ownership of these weapons, does not join the NPT, does not practically approve the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone, uses cluster bombs against civilians and has a long list of other unlawful actions on its report card advises the others in this august body.

Based on the assessments of different security analysts around the world, as well as the polls conducted on popular levels, Israel, with its expansionist policies, militaristic tendency, possession of at least 200 nuclear weapons, its desire for military edge in the Middle East and its daily killing of innocent people, is indeed a source of threat to regional and international security. The recent best-seller by the former American President Jimmy Carter on the Israeli practice of apartheid against Palestinians rightly points to the dangers and destructive implications of Israeli behaviour on the Middle East as well as on the international community. According to the recent scholarly work of two distinguished American political scientists, Meisheimer and Walt, the Israeli lobby was one of the key and contributing factors behind the occupation of Iraq based on false and fabricated evidence. You all know the details and we all know its consequences. The same Israeli machinery - the propaganda machinery - is trying to create new imaginary and fake threats.

Israelis' attitudes, pronouncements and actions are indeed threatening and harmful to regional and international security. It is the responsibility of all members of the international community to stand against Israeli policies of aggression, occupation, suppression and proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is the nuclear weapons of Israel and not the peaceful nuclear programme of Iran which is a security threat and should be taken seriously.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Cheng of China.

Mr. CHENG (China) (spoke in Chinese): A short while ago, the Russian delegation distributed the third version of the compilation prepared by China and the Russian Federation of comments and suggestions relating to working paper CD/1679. As stated by our Russian colleague, this document will become an official document of the Conference on Disarmament. In 2003 and 2006, China and Russia submitted two earlier versions of the compilation and the current version is the third in the series.

Last year the Conference held a focused debate on the issue of outer space: parties engaged in a detailed and useful discussion, stating their views on possible elements of a legal instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space and putting forward a number of pertinent suggestions.

This third compilation has been formulated in the light of those suggestions. Like the two previous versions, the third version also observes the principles of objectivity and openness. While it brings together the many consensus views expressed by parties, it also does not ignore

(Mr. Cheng, China)

differences of opinion and these are objectively reflected in the text. It is our hope that it will help promote relevant research work by all parties concerned and that it will help facilitate our consideration of the agenda item on prevention of an arms race in outer space and the future negotiation and conclusion of a legal instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

During this meeting a number of delegations have made reference in their statements to the test conducted by China. There is an ancient Chinese saying which enjoins us to treat others as we would have them treat us. With regard to the recent test conducted by China in outer space, I have already had occasion, during the last plenary of the Conference, to state our position on the matter. If some of my colleagues are not well served by their memory, I would be happy to repeat that position here.

The test conducted by China was not targeted against any country, nor does it constitute a threat to any country. China has already made its position on the matter manifestly clear to the parties concerned by various means and through various channels. China has all along maintained that the Conference on Disarmament should negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. In recent years, China, together with the Russian Federation and other interested countries, has put forward many working documents with a view to promoting endeavours to that end, including on such elements of the legal instrument as provisions to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of use of force against space objects. We hope that the Conference will start substantive work on these matters at the earliest possible stage.

We note that, in their statements at this meeting, some countries have voiced concerns about the test conducted by China and that the countries in question include those which take a negative view of our Conference's handling of the issue of outer space. It is not my intention here to cast aspersions on the sincerity of the apparent concerns expressed by these countries. I would, however, like to point out that, if you are genuinely concerned about the issues of security and peace in outer space, then you should change the negative attitude which you demonstrate in the Conference on Disarmament and you should not constantly obstruct its work. I hope that your actions will now match your words.

We have just heard from the United States representative that the United States has no intention "to claim space for its own or to weaponize it". What I would like to ask in that case is this: why then is our United States colleague so afraid of negotiating a treaty to prevent the weaponization of outer space? I do not know the reason for this. She has just provided us with copious reasons, but so far I have failed to understand what she is getting at. She mentions the so-called issue of definitions, but if we are going to get embroiled in the issue of definitions, we may also come up against it in our discussions of other topics, as we may the issue of scope, for example. Do we not also encounter the same issues in our consideration of a fissile material cut-off treaty? If, when we are faced with issues of this kind, we do not discuss them any further, why then are we wasting our time here? What I mean is, if we have difficulties when dealing with the issue of definitions or scope, and if this then causes us to stop our discussions, should we not follow the same approach to other topics?

(Mr. Cheng, China)

Where the space policy of the United States is concerned, as we all know, the United States representative has just vouchsafed certain explanations. I do want to believe what she says, but the facts themselves make it hard for me to be entirely convinced. We all know that her country never discontinued its research and development work on outer space weapons, including the military theories inherent in the concept of space warfare which continue to emerge and to be further developed in that country. In her statement, she mentioned a national space policy paper issued by her country in August 2006. We have all seen that this is an allegedly “unclassified” document, and apparently we are all familiar with this “unclassified” document. Given that Americans are constantly calling for transparency, however, I wonder whether she might not be able to give us all a copy of this “unclassified” document, or perhaps she could provide a brief introduction - there is no need for us to have the original text.

Turning now to the issue of debris, this is a very long-standing issue, which has confronted us ever since humankind first started exploring outer space, some 50 years ago. We are told that there are now more than 10,000 pieces of debris in space more than 10 cm across and that these belong to more than 50 different countries, regions or organizations. The great majority of these have no connection with China: according to my information, the United States has the honour of being responsible for 41.6 per cent of these 10,000 or so pieces of debris, so it is in no position to point fingers at other countries on this issue.

We have just heard our Japanese colleague also voice his concern about the issue of debris. What I would like to ask is, did your country express that concern to its ally, the United States of America, concerning the debris which the United States created when it conducted anti-satellite weapon tests in the past? My memory is not all that good and I do not have a very clear notion of the history of that period. But I would like here to emphasize that the test conducted by China was not in breach of any international law.

In closing, I would like to make one further point. In my statement during our informal discussions yesterday I also recalled the positive role played in the outer space arena by the ABM treaty, and it is a matter of great regret that this treaty is no longer in existence. What now gives us cause for concern is that some countries are vigorously developing anti-missile programmes, and this has a close bearing on the question of outer space. Anti-missile programmes are not conducive to regional or global peace and stability, whether in Asia or in Europe. We are concerned about the negative consequences which those activities might have for international peace and stability. In this regard we share the concerns expressed by our Russian colleagues.

Finally, we have just heard our Japanese colleague express his hopes that we would show more so-called “transparency” in respect of our military activities. I am not quite sure exactly what sort of transparency he has in mind. What transparency did Japan and the United States display about their own anti-missile programmes? It would perhaps be better if you turned your attention to things that happened in the past and clarified those first.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of China for his statement, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Shoukry of Egypt.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt): I take the floor on the presumption that there are no further speakers, to raise a procedural point. It has come to my attention that both my statements that were read out during the meeting have not been distributed, despite the fact that this delegation submitted to the secretariat sufficient copies for the members of the Conference and a limited number of copies to be available to the observers.

If that decision on the part of the secretariat is based on the circular of the necessity of providing the secretariat with 150 copies, I draw attention to the fact that this has not been the practical practice during previous sessions, and it does not necessarily conform with, I presume, the secretariat's and member States' desire to rationalize costs and expenses. I would thereby hope that you, Mr. President, will take the necessary action to have those statements distributed and to advise the secretariat possibly to amend their previous circular in this regard.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Egypt for his statement, and yes, Ambassador, we shall certainly speak to the secretariat to make sure that copies are distributed.

May I now give the floor to Ambassador Rocca of the United States of America in exercise of her right of reply?

Ms. ROCCA (United States of America): I shall just keep it very short. I would like to recommend that our colleagues look closely at the record when it comes out and reread the comments that our Chinese colleague has just made, because a lot of what he said bolstered and went a long way to even strengthen the arguments that were made in the United States statement.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States of America for her statement, and I would now like to give the floor to Ambassador Tarui of Japan, also in the exercise of the right of reply, I presume.

Mr. TARUI (Japan): The Chinese Ambassador has asked me about two issues: one is the Chinese debris caused by the Chinese missile test in space, and the other what kind of relation with the sort of debris the United States made in the past.

First of all, my major point is to stress the danger being brought about by the recent Chinese nuclear space test, which is definitely causing quite a lot of debris in space that would damage other nations' satellites in orbit. This is not only Japan's concern. This is all of international society's concern, which you have heard from many other delegations today.

I am not in a position to say anything about the United States' activities in the past. I do not have any idea about that. At the same time, I am not the United States representative on this matter.

The second point: you asked me the meaning of transparency of Chinese military activities. First of all, I appreciate and I value the recent endeavour, efforts, by the Chinese Government to make military activities more transparent, compared to the past I experienced. And, of course,

(Mr. Tarui, Japan)

we very much encourage recent Chinese developments, but still, we are not very satisfied with the degree of transparency of Chinese military activities, as we have frequently discussed between our two countries. So this is not a very appropriate topic to discuss in the CD.

But anyway, two points. We appreciate the recent Chinese efforts to make more transparent reports to the international world with regard to military activities, and at the same time, still, the Japanese basic position is to request China to be more transparent in its military activities.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Japan for his statement. I see Ambassador Cheng of China has requested the floor.

Mr. CHENG (China) (spoke in Chinese): As it is already lunchtime, I do not wish to prolong our discussions any further. After listening to the previous statements, however, I would just like to make a few more remarks. We have just heard from our Japanese colleague that he is not very familiar with past history. I hope that, when he has refreshed his memory, he can share his knowledge with us here at this meeting. The question I would like to ask is: did Japan express similar concerns regarding the debris created by the United States when it conducted anti-satellite weapon tests in the past?

My second question relates to the issue of transparency. We discussed this issue last year in the Conference on Disarmament. It was also discussed in the First Committee of the General Assembly. Transparency applies to all countries and it cannot be argued that Japan enjoys a special prerogative here, that it is not bound by the obligation of transparency. Where transparency is concerned, I am able to state that not only is China's record in no way inferior to that of Japan, in many respects we even perform better.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of China for his statement. I see the representative of Japan has requested the floor. But before I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Japan, may I make an appeal to all delegations? Please, in the interests of the dignity of this particular chamber, confine the rights of reply consistent with common practice to two interventions only.

Having said that, however, I shall give you the floor.

Mr. TARUI (Japan): I shall be very short. As the Chinese Ambassador said, lunchtime has come.

The first question he asked me - had Japan criticized in the past United States debris caused by United States activities? - frankly speaking, I do not have any exact memories or ideas on this matter, but we may know that in COPUOS there have been long discussions on debris problems, so I think that in the course of the discussions, every delegation might touch upon all the possibilities and all the activities with regard to debris problems. But I do not know exactly whether Japan criticized the United States on this matter or not, frankly.

(Mr. Tarui, Japan)

The second question, I have already told very precisely, so I have no need to answer at this moment.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Japan for his intervention.

At this point I do not have any further speakers on my list. Is there any delegation that wishes to take the floor? That does not appear to be the case.

Dear colleagues, as you may be aware, today's plenary is the last one under the presidency of South Africa.

Looking back, it seems like only yesterday when Ambassador Mtshali and myself started our preparations for the informal consultations that commenced last October in New York and which were continued here in Geneva. Based on the outcome of these consultations, we tried to formulate a plan that would be practical and feasible and that would provide impetus to the CD to engage on the many important issues that the Conference deals with.

What started off, I suppose, as a vague idea during October and November of last year has now finally moved beyond the planning stage, as witnessed by last week's first informal meetings chaired by the coordinators. The stage has been set, and it is now up to all CD members to make the most of opportunities that will move the work of the Conference forward. Or, to put it another way: the horse knows all too well where the water is, but it is up to the horse itself to start drinking!

During the informal consultations that South Africa conducted on the margins of the First Committee meeting in New York during October last year, I was struck by the words of one delegation. This delegation said that perhaps the CD does not require a programme of work: it merely requires a programme that works. Now if South Africa's presidency may possibly contribute to moving the work of the Conference forward - in whichever manner - my delegation will be honoured to have been afforded the opportunity to assist in such a process.

What has been achieved to date would not have been possible without the assistance of all the other 2007 CD Presidents, and I wish to thank the delegations of Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland and Syria for their invaluable support. I also wish Ambassador March of Spain every success with his presidency, which starts next week.

Please allow me furthermore to also thank Ambassadors Strømme, Trezza, Meyer, Paranhos, Draganov, Wibisono and Duncan for accepting their assignments as coordinators on the various agenda items and also wish them well for what promises to be hard work throughout the year.

I also wish to express my appreciation for the assistance and advice received throughout the South African presidency from the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference. This also applies to all the staff members of DDA, who were always available to assist the South African presidency and indeed also the P-6.

(The President)

Then last, but not least, I would also like to thank the interpreters, whose workload has increased dramatically this year. As always, they make it possible for us to share views and ideas with one another.

Before concluding this plenary meeting, I have the following communication that I received from the secretariat. With reference to the conduct of work in our informal meetings, it would facilitate the understanding of national positions if members who have prepared written statements would make copies available beforehand to the interpreters, as this would be greatly appreciated by our interpreters.

Just another announcement: Ambassador March of Spain has also requested me to inform all delegations that on 26 February this year, at 6.30 p.m., a piano concert will take place here at the Palais to mark the start of the Spanish presidency of the CD. Invitations to this concert will now be distributed in the room by Ambassador March's delegation, and I would merely request colleagues to stay a moment or two, until such time as they have received the invitations.

This concludes our business for today at this formal plenary meeting, unless any delegation perhaps wishes at this late stage to still take the floor. That does not appear to be the case.

Our next plenary meeting, under the presidency of Spain, will be held on Tuesday, 20 February 2007, at 10 a.m. in this chamber.

This plenary meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.