Statement

by

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Introduction of the Draft Resolution on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space

21st October, 2003

New York
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to introduce the Draft Resolution on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space as contained in document A/C.1/58.L.44. It has been a privilege for my delegation together with the delegation of Egypt to table this important Resolution at the First Committee for long years for the attention of the distinguished delegates and the international community, at large. This year we have been joined by an unprecedented number of co-sponsors. Although almost all the co-sponsors belong to the Movement of Non-Aligned countries, it is our view and belief that the thrust and substance of this Resolution represents the preponderant will of all the people in the world.

Mr Chairman,

We are all familiar with the awe and respect with which outer space and celestial bodies were treated by our forefathers and in fact by every succeeding generation of the human kind. It was generally believed that this space has a divine touch, that it is imbued with a serene atmosphere and will remain peaceful forever. It is also our firm belief that outer space as the next frontier of the human kind, should remain a peaceful arena for all time for the benefit of all living beings on earth. It has been emphasized and reiterated in many fora that outer space is the common heritage of all human kind. It will be the greatest folly of the human race if we allow outer space to become the next arena for an arms race at a time when most people on earth live precariously, both socially and economically and are affected by multifaceted conflicts. We simply cannot afford a terrestrial arms competition at this juncture of human history. Precious human, material and energy resources are required for more noble purposes than fighting wars in a new frontier.
Mr. Chairman,

Acts of terrorism that are taking place and have taken place in many parts of the world provide ample reason for Member States of the United Nations to assess as to how human security can be ensured. We are required individually and collectively to search for solutions to confront this abominable phenomenon of terrorism. In this regard it is becoming more and more evident that weapon based approach is not a panacea for ills affecting human security including terrorism. While terrorism cannot be justified for whatever reason it is committed, we have reckoned that deployment of exotic weapons even with overwhelming fire power cannot completely secure human security in a world that is globalising, democratizing and liberalizing. In this context, in our view, taking the arms race into outer space will be counter productive and meaningless, if we cannot achieve human security on the ground. The world requires resources on the ground for multifaceted, multidimensional tasks to deter destabilizing forces and terrorists from terrorizing the civilized world.

Mr. Chairman,

From time immemorial, it has been popular wisdom that every action has a reaction and the stability of a situation depends on balance and equilibrium. When such a balance, both material and perceptive, eludes a society or the world at large, instability has always reigned, resulting in conflict and calamities. In this context, most perceive that a sense of strategic balance that currently pervades in the world could come under strain if outer space becomes an arena for an arms race.
Mr. Chairman,

It is now recognized that breathtaking advancements in technology make it possible for outer space to be used for multifaceted tasks that impact upon the earth. Most of these innovative uses are beneficial to human kind and some add to peace and stability. Nevertheless, weaponization and an arms race beyond peaceful uses for offensive or belligerent purposes will no doubt rupture any prevailing balance leading to instability.

Mr. Chairman,

The time has come for the international community to focus its attention on outer space with a view to preventing this pristine environment from becoming a battleground for military supremacy rather than military stability. It is patently clear that taking measures to prevent an arms race is more effective, less complicated and less expensive than to take measures to roll back such a race after it has begun. No doubt there will be substantive peace dividends that may arise out of the belligerent use of outer space. The benefits of peaceful activities in space which are presently confined mostly to a few existing and emerging space capable countries could also be made available to more countries as a result.

Mr. Chairman,

It is in this context that the co-sponsors of this Resolution wish to introduce the text on this subject for consideration and adoption by the First Committee. The text, you would observe, as in previous years recalls and affirms several previous international agreements on this issue including at the SSOD I, to take further measures with a view to arriving at appropriate negotiations to prevent an arms
race in outer space. The resolution reiterates the mutually complimentary nature of bilateral and multilateral efforts and we wish to highlight the importance of greater transparency in sharing information on all bilateral efforts in this field. It is the view of the sponsors of the resolution that the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the primary role in the negotiation of multilateral agreements, as appropriate, on this subject. The resolution invites the CD to commence work towards this end. It is our expectation that at its 2004 session, CD will be able to establish an ad-hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space with an agreed, appropriate, mandate. Time is certainly running out for action on this important issue and we appreciate the valuable contributions made recently at the CD by China and Russian Federation on this issue, with a view to commencing work at the CD.

Mr. Chairman,

There have been several suggestions either to alter or to strengthen the text of this resolution based on national positions and priorities of several States. In this regard, we respect the preference of some countries for a gradual step by step approach towards arriving at a solution to prevent an arms race in outer space. In this context and in a spirit of compromise and recognizing the need for accommodation of all views, we have tabled the resolution text similar to that of last year with only technical updates. We, the sponsors are mindful that the text of the resolution should enjoy widest, if not, universal support so that the general collective will of the international community can be manifested in one text. We therefore hope that all member states in the First Committee will be able to support this resolution to enable the general view of the international community to be reflected through this resolution and that the adoption of the resolution will contribute towards long overdue action on this issue both within the Conference on Disarmament, and elsewhere.