Cluster 3 of the First Committee
Outer space (disarmament aspects)

19 October 2009

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares,
Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament
Mr. Chairman,

The prevention of an arms race in outer space is, by unanimous understanding, one of the four issues central in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament.

More than a quarter of a century ago, in 1983, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 38/70, which invited the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That happened in 1985 and the Ad Hoc Committee functioned for almost ten years until it was discontinued.

A great amount of work was done in examining the existing body of International Law regarding outer space and outer space activities as well as proposals concerning the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Substantive and detailed discussions took place on the possible multilateral measures to reinforce transparency and build confidence. Moreover, those discussions brought light on the need of a multilateral legal instrument to plug the loopholes remaining in International Law on the matter of preventing an arms race in outer space.

In spite of the inexistence of an ad hoc subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament during the last 15 years, its Agenda kept an item on the prevention of an arms race in outer space as one of the four core issues. Likewise the General Assembly continued to adopt by virtually consensus, resolutions on several aspects of the question.

Last year, Resolution 63/40 again invited the Conference on Disarmament to establish a subsidiary body for the fulfillment of its primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

On last May 29th, the Conference on Disarmament, as part of its Program of Work, duly established a Working Group to discuss substantively, without limitation, all the issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, taking into consideration all relevant views and past, present and future proposals on the issue.
Brazil supports the draft resolutions introduced in this First Committee concerning outer space.

Brazil expects that the Conference on Disarmament, early next year, adopt its Agenda and Program of Work, which include a Working Group on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That Working Group should start its discussions soon after its establishment.

Brazil expects that the substantive discussions in the Working Group will open the way for the Conference on Disarmament to decide on the negotiation of legal texts that will ensure that outer space will be free of any weapons and that activities and objects in outer space will be exempt of any threat and of any use of force.

These firm positions of Brazil find their roots in the steady support Brazil has always given to measures and initiatives for general and complete disarmament. They can be proved by our unswervingly peaceful foreign policy and our constant participation in all fora that have been working on disarmament in the last 60 years.

In addition, Brazil is one of the not so numerous countries that develop a complete space program, which involves extensive international cooperation. The Chinese-Brazilian Earth Resources Satellites is a most successful scientific cooperation program and is the biggest South-South cooperation initiative.

Mister Chairman,

The arguments against the negotiation of legally binding commitments to avoid the placement of any weapons and prevent any acts involving threat or use of force in outer space are not sustainable. The international community can not accept the risk of disruption of space activities that are increasingly vital for all.

Many of the items in the agenda of this First Committee call upon us to revert or correct dangerous situations that threaten peace and security or even the very existence of the world. The items we are dealing with in this debate, concerning outer space, call for decisions to prevent the breaking of peace in a vast realm while there is still time.

Thank you.