

Mr. Chairman,

It is my honour on behalf of the European Union to speak on the draft resolution L.4 entitled "Missiles". The Acceding Countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) align themselves with this explanation of vote.

Mr. Chairman,

The European Union has decided to abstain on this draft resolution on missiles, as was the case last year.

Let me underline that our abstention must not be regarded as a lack of commitment on this issue. Indeed reference to the threat represented by ballistic missiles is contained in the "Declaration on non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction", made by the EU Head of State and Government in Thessaloniki on June 20, 2003, where it is said that "WMD and missile proliferation put at risk the security of our states, our peoples and our interests in the world". The EU welcomes the International Code of Conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles which was successfully launched in November 2002 in the Hague and which has up to now been subscribed by 109 States and the recent meeting of Subscribing States which was held in New York on October 2-3, 2003. We consider that HCOC is an initial, though essential step to effectively address the problem of missile proliferation from a multilateral global perspective without precluding other initiatives or, in the longer term, more comprehensive approaches. The Code established fundamental principles and a multilateral framework for co-operation. Let me take this opportunity to call upon all States to adhere to the Code and to stress that the E.U. believes that a relationship between the Code and the United Nations should be established.

The EU remains deeply convinced that the Code of Conduct constitutes the most concrete initiative in the fight against the proliferation of ballistic missiles and offers the best chances of leading to tangible results in the short term. This includes the right of every State to reap the benefits of the peaceful use of space. Unfortunately the draft resolution does not make any specific reference to the Code.

The EU is also not convinced that another panel of governmental experts, as proposed by the resolution, to assist in the preparation of a report on the issue of missiles in all its aspects, is an efficient next step. Any future panel would only be meaningful on the basis of an agreed specific mandate which ensured that added value could be offered. These are the reasons, Mr Chairman, why the EU is not in a position to support the draft resolution.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.