

*Mission Permanente d'Egypte
auprès des Nations Unies*



بعثة مصر الدائمة
لدى الأمم المتحدة
جنيف

Statement by H.E Ambassador Naéla Gabr

*Permanent Representative of Egypt
to the Conference
on Disarmament*

29 August 2002

Please check against delivery

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in your endeavors to revitalize the work of the Conference. I would also like to convey my appreciation to your predecessors the Ambassadors of Ethiopia, Finland, France and Germany for their efforts. I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Sergei Ordzonikidze, Secretary General of the Conference, Mr. Enrique Roman Morey, Deputy Secretary-General and the members of the Secretariat for their dedication to the work of the Conference. Our gratitude also goes to the three Special Coordinators, which were appointed this session, for their efforts and the comprehensive reports they have presented to us at our plenary meeting last week.

Mr. President,

As our annual session draws to an end and looking back on our deliberations, the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) stands out among the important issues raised by delegations in their interventions during our plenary meetings. We welcome this renewed interest in PAROS in the CD, as Egypt will be, in a couple of weeks' time, introducing the draft resolution on PAROS to the First Committee of the General Assembly. We hope that this resolution, which we alternatively present with Sri Lanka, will draw unanimous acceptance as it has in previous years.

Egypt's long-standing commitment to PAROS stems from a firm belief that outer space is the common heritage of humanity and that its exploitation should therefore be done exclusively for peaceful purposes to the benefit of mankind. Egypt, together with a majority of countries, is convinced that only a comprehensive legally binding instrument can effectively remedy the enormous shortcomings in the current legal regime relating to outer space and in particular the absence of a prohibition to deploy weapons other than weapons of mass destruction. The Final Document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly (1978) on Disarmament (SSOD-1) asserted in this regard that "in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, further measures should be taken and appropriate negotiations held...".

In this connection, Resolution 56/23 adopted at the 56th Session of the United Nations General Assembly "reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the 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". The CD has extensively addressed issues pertaining to PAROS through the Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS established by the CD from 1985 to 1994. The conclusion of first Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS, chaired by Egypt in 1985, remains as relevant today as ever when it underlined "the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space" (CD/641). We hope that the Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS will be re-established as soon as possible.

In this context, Egypt welcomes the working paper submitted by the delegations of China and the Russian Federation (and co-sponsored by Vietnam, Indonesia, Belarus, Zimbabwe and Syria) to the CD on 27 June 2002 and entitled "Possible Elements for a Future International Legal Agreement on the Prevention of the Deployment of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects" (CD/1679). It represents a first step towards addressing the issue of the de-militarization outer space and will certainly constitute a valuable input in the future work of the Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS.

While we support the main thrust of this working paper, in our view, any future legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space should prohibit the military use of outer space. Furthermore, it should entail significant provisions on cooperation and assistance ensuring that "the exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and shall be the province of all mankind" as highlighted in Article I of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. This has gained further salience as the gap is increasing between countries who possess space capabilities, and those who don't. In addition, we have a number of other substantive comments, which we would put forward once an Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS is established

Mr. President,

We are witnessing unprecedented technological and scientific advancements in the commercial and scientific uses of outer space. As a result, humanity is increasingly dependent on outer space in a growing number of activities ranging from communications to agriculture. These developments of a global reach underline the responsibility of the international community towards present and future generations to ensure that outer space is an area of cooperation rather than military confrontation. The consequences of an arms race in outer space would be devastating. We are particularly concerned at its negative implications on efforts for nuclear disarmament, our highest priority in the work of the CD.

Egypt believes that, both on the global and regional levels, peace and security cannot be achieved through doctrines of military superiority and sophisticated weapons systems but rather through cooperation between all states. In this connection, PAROS illustrates the relevance of multilateralism in the field of disarmament. Indeed, all countries and in particular countries with significant space assets, would benefit from the conclusion of a legally binding instrument that would preserve outer space from a costly and dangerous arms race. In this regard, we reaffirm our support for the commencement in the CD of negotiations on a comprehensive regime to prevent the use of outer space for all military purposes.

Thank you