

Check against delivery



Permanent Mission of India
to the Conference on Disarmament

Statement

By

AMBASSADOR JAYANT PRASAD

Permanent Representative of India to the
Conference on Disarmament

On

PREVENTION OF AN ARMS RACE IN OUTER SPACE

At

The Conference on Disarmament

Geneva: 8 June 2006

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We commend your efforts in organising structured discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) and look forward to actively participating in them. You have our full and earnest cooperation in support of your endeavours. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Ambassador Costea of Romania for the productive discussions on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty held last month.

2. Speaking to a university audience through a multi-media teleconference just last week, on 31st May 2006, the President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, a well-known space scientist, evoked the vision of creating "wealth and prosperity in the Global Knowledge Village." Three years earlier, addressing the 'Space Summit' of the Indian Science Congress he had cautioned: "we must recognise the necessity for world's space community to avoid terrestrial geo-political conflict to be drawn into outer space, thus threatening the space assets belonging to all mankind".

3. The importance of the peaceful applications of space technologies for all countries was strongly underlined in the Conference organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on 30-31 March 2006 on '*Building the Architecture for Sustainable Space Security.*' A representative of Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) made a presentation at that Conference on how India has been harnessing space-based assets for its social and economic development.

4. India has placed satellites in outer space for establishing global connectivity, eradicating illiteracy, providing health security, improving navigation and meteorological services, optimising management of natural resources and the environment, and coping with natural disasters. A more recent application has been the setting up, across India, of Village Resource Centres as a single-window delivery mechanism for a variety of space-enabled services, including tele-education, tele-medicine and interactive advisories on land and water management.

5. There has, thus, been a dramatic acceleration, in recent years, in the peaceful uses of outer space and in international cooperation for this purpose. So also has there been an increased potential, in particular for the developing countries, to leapfrog and become full participants in the technology-based global economy of the twenty-first century. India, for instance, has in the past year signed agreements with the Russian Federation and the European Union for cooperation in their GLONASS and Galileo programmes, respectively, and ISRO's *Chandrayaan* mission to moon in 2008 will carry lunar surface mapping instruments from Bulgaria, the European Space Agency and NASA. A connectivity mission between India and the countries of the African Union is also being pursued to provide both communication links and a range of space-enabled development oriented services.

6. Given our increasing efforts to use outer space for developmental purposes and the all-pervasive application of space technology for almost every aspect of modern life, my delegation would like to emphasize the importance of the security of assets based in outer space and the enormously harmful consequences of any threat to them. We, therefore, strongly support the quest to upgrade the present international legal framework for regulating space activities, set at the relative infancy of the development of space technology, and to strengthen the existing space law for the peaceful use and exploration of outer space. The placement of weapons in outer space may herald a new arms race and disrupt the peaceful uses of outer space. The respect for the safety and security of space assets and capabilities of all countries is a prerequisite for ensuring the continued flow of space-enabled services to all countries, including to developing countries. We hope that our work in the Conference will contribute to this goal.

7. Soon after the launch of the Sputnik in 1957, and notwithstanding the competition of the Cold War, the international community embraced the idea of the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful and scientific pursuits. This became the accepted global norm the very first time the United Nations General Assembly considered the 'Questions of the Peaceful Use of Outer Space' in 1958 and encapsulated it in its resolution 1348(XIII). Conscious that space exploration had opened new possibilities for the improvement of life of humankind, it also created the Ad-hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to harness outer space activities for cooperative mutual gain.

8. COPUOS since developed five outer space-related treaties, including the Outer Space Treaty, which constitutes the cornerstone of the international legal framework for the peaceful application of outer space. Its four core principles are that the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out 'for the benefit and interest of all countries;' that outer space will be 'the province of all mankind;' that outer space shall be 'free for exploration and use by all countries;' and that parties of the Treaty 'undertake not to place in orbit around the earth any object carrying nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction.' The Final Document of the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-I) had stipulated that, in accordance with the spirit of the Outer Space Treaty, further measures should be taken and international negotiations held "in order to prevent an arms race in outer space." We look upon our current activity in the Conference as a step towards attaining that objective.

9. The issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space has been on the agenda of this Conference since 1982 and an Ad-hoc Committee on PAROS functioned for a decade since 1985. The Committee was engaged in examining, as a first step at that stage, through substantive and general consideration, issues relevant to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The issue remains as relevant today, if not more, as it was then.

10. India supports the establishment of an Ad-hoc Committee of the Conference to deal with the issue of PAROS as outlined in the A-5 proposal. We believe that it provides a good basis for commencing our work on PAROS, which India stands ready to join.

10. We welcome the initiative of China and that of your delegation in presenting working papers and non-papers dealing with various aspects of the issue before us. They are most useful in enabling a better understanding of the different dimensions of outer space security. We compliment those delegations that have invited their experts to join in our deliberations. Their contribution would enrich our debate and enable us to fully appreciate the technical and legal aspects of the challenge we face today.

Mr. President,

12. My delegation's approach to a programme of work of the Conference has been consistent: any solution to end the current impasse must be responsive to the security concerns of all the constituents of the Conference. We do, therefore, hope that our deliberations on PAROS during this week and structured discussions on the other remaining issues on the agenda of the Conference will pave the way for reaching a consensus allowing the Conference to begin its substantive work, which is its principal vocation and *raison d'être*.