

**STATEMENT OF MR. JEAN-MICHEL DESPAX,
CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I.,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

IN PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

- Prevention of an arms race in space -

Geneva, 30 June 2005

Mr Chairman,

You invited us to express us during five plenary sessions on the major topics for the Disarmament Conference. Today after the new issues, the nuclear disarmament and the cut-off, I am replying to your fourth invitation about the topic of the prevention of an arms race in space or PAROS.

My statement will naturally be based on the European statement pronounced in New York by the Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands during the 59th session of the United Nations, on 19 October 2004. This statement is composed of 3 key-ideas:

The first is the need to prevent an arms race in space because of the increasing implication of the international community in activities dedicated to development and progress in space.

The second reaffirms that it is within the Disarmament Conference, the only multilateral forum of negotiations about disarmament, that any decision should be taken about the prevention of an arms race in space.

Finally, the third consists to support the establishing of a subsidiary body to the Disarmament Conference in order to deal with this issue, on the basis of mandate which would have received the approval of all.

This European Union's position corresponds to the approach of my country, which has taken an active part in the work undertaken on this topic since the beginning of the Eighties in this forum. Since the origin of this debate, France has been in favour of a pacific use of outer space. For France, this remains an essential stake for international security. In June 2001, the French President declared that the "non-militarization of space [...] is an essential element. It has been preserved up to now despite all temptations of the cold war. It must be maintained. It would not be in the interest of anyone to open this new Pandora's box. No one could maintain a monopoly in this area. It would result from it a new arms race, whose end would be disastrous for everyone ". This position always guides our approach.

It follows from those three essential principles:

- the free access for everyone to outer space for pacific applications;
- the security's and the integrity's preservation of the satellites in orbit;
- the taking into account of defence's legitimate interests of the States.

Mr Chairman, the issue of the prevention of an arms race in space has been now treated at the Disarmament Conference in relation to other different issues for more than three years. We estimate that this situation is artificial in many aspects. Certainly we have seen from China and Russia great efforts in order to taken a softer line about the mandate of which could be invested a special committee on the issue.

In addition, we have taken note of the proposals contained in the "non-paper" suggested by the Ambassador Chris Sanders entitled "Food for thought". We are convinced that the PAROS's issue, as others, must be examined independently of the other issues on which we are mobilised.

Mr Chairman,
I thank you.