

**Intervention by Sri Lanka
to the Informal Plenary Meeting of the Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 27th May, 2004 : Item PAROS**

Mr. President

On behalf of my Ambassador who is out of Geneva today, I would like to join other delegations in conveying our appreciation for your efforts in enabling the holding of these informal plenary sessions. We in the group of 21 can take pride in the leadership shown by you and your predecessors Ambassador Pablo Macedo, Ambassador Rajmah Hussein and Ambassador Amina Mohamed in their efforts to revitalize the work of the CD.

Let me also say at the outset that my delegation attaches the highest priority to seeing the CD agree on a programme of work. To this end my delegation urges you, Mr. President, to continue the efforts to build upon the growing consensus around the cross-regional proposal of the 5 Ambassadors. We are also willing to consider any other proposals that find consensus.

We were pleased to note that the majority of delegations expressed support for the re-establishment of an Ad-hoc Committee on the issue of PAROS in the CD during the recent open-ended informal consultations conducted by then President Rajmah Hussein. Over the last several years, my delegation together with the delegation of Egypt have introduced at the First Committee of the General Assembly a resolution on the "prevention of an arms race in outer space" calling for the recommencement of stalled negotiations on PAROS, at the earliest. Last year an unprecedented number of co-sponsors joined this initiative, enabling it to be adopted by 160 votes in favour with none against and three abstentions. This is of course a significant development.

It may be that the unprecedented, amazing, photographs now being beamed across television screens around the world from the Mars Rover, Opportunity and Spirit have once again rekindled in our hearts and minds the wonder of space exploration and strengthened popular resolve to keep this pristine world of space a peaceful arena for all

time for all the peoples of the world. Today, there a widespread recognition of the notion that outer space should be preserved as a 'sanctuary' for the common heritage of mankind. The Outer Space Treaty that came into force almost 37 years ago, refers to the peaceful use of outer space. It has created an important norm for keeping weapons out of space, which have also contributed to the widespread increasing support for the PAROS initiative.

Since the 1960's we have witnessed unprecedented advances in space technology coming within the reach of an increasing number of both developed and developing countries. Fuelled by globalization, some space applications such as in broadcasting, meteorology, navigation, education and health, environmental and crop management, have become crucial to the everyday functioning of a modern society. At the same time it is becoming increasingly clear that the line between commercial and scientific use of space technology and military use of such technology is fast blurring, to the point that there is an urgent need today to ensure that space, the last frontier of humankind, is used only for non-offensive and non-belligerent purposes.

~~We have always held that outer space should be explored for the common benefit and in a spirit of cooperation and not confrontation.~~
Mr. President, my delegation has always held the view that preventing an arms race in outer space is an easier task than attempting to control and decelerate such a race after it has begun. We cannot really afford an expensive competition in outer space when there remain so many other challenges before us such as poverty, hunger, disease and deprivation.

Mr. President, the CD had extensively addressed issues pertaining to PAROS through the Ad-hoc Committee on PAROS established between 1985 and 1994. The Committee did useful work devoting most of its time to address issues relating to confidence building measures such as transparency in outer space activities, a 'code of conduct' and 'rules of the road' in outer space. A proposal for a regime of prior notification of space launchers was also presented which has since been further developed. Another proposal made at that time was the possibility to amend Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty so as to extend its scope on the total ban of weapons in space.

~~It is in this spirit for larger UNCT S. & together with Egypt has sponsored a resolution on PAROS at the First Comm. The Our appeal has always been to build confidence among states and to extend this agreed framework of action to all member states.~~

In 2002 the delegations of China and the Russian Federation presented to the CD a working paper on 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, which has been subsequently revised through informal discussions. This is a positive contribution towards our efforts to elaborate an agreed mandate for an Ad Hoc Committee, which would take into account the urgent need to address the issue of PAROS in the CD.

Mr. President as far back as 1985 Sri Lanka had proposed a moratorium on the testing and development of space weapons preceding multilateral negotiations on a treaty to prohibit ^{all} weapons in space. We see merit therefore in recent calls for a series of independent declarations from major space faring nations that they would not be the first to deploy weapons in space, which would provide considerable protection to existing space assets until a treaty could be negotiated.
