

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1569

4 February 1999

Original: ENGLISH

CANADA

Proposal concerning CD action on outer space

Canada renews its proposal that

- The CD establish an ad hoc committee on outer space with the mandate to negotiate a convention for the non-weaponization of outer space.

BACKGROUND

- A number of limited international agreements deal with outer space, most notably "The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies".
- Under Article IV of that Treaty, States Parties to the Treaty "undertake not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any kinds of weapons of mass destruction ... or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner."
- There is no multilateral agreement banning the deployment of weapons other than weapons of mass destruction in outer space.
- There are a growing number of States with the capacity or near-capacity to place objects into orbit; this will only increase in the future.
- There is currently no arms race in outer space. Canada accepts the current military uses of outer space for surveillance, intelligence-gathering and communications. Our focus is on the non-weaponization of outer space, i.e. no positioning of actual weapons in outer space.
- By 'weapon' we mean e.g. "any device or component of a system designed to inflict physical harm through deposition of mass and/or energy on any other object".
- On verification of such a Treaty many useful ideas already exist, including work done in earlier CD Ad Hoc Committees on Outer Space. We welcome an early realistic reappraisal of those basic concepts.
- As an interim step towards full negotiations, Canada would accept the appointment of a CD Special Coordinator with an appropriate mandate to explore prospects for the early establishment of an ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate. The above proposal as well as other relevant suggestions could then be fully considered for future action.
