

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I call to order the 432nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I should like to give a warm welcome to His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Mr. Sten Andersson, who will be addressing the Conference today as the first speaker. Mr. Andersson has long experience in politics, and occupying an important position in Swedish political life as a member of parliament and a minister. His presence among us reflects his personal interest, and Sweden's active role, in disarmament, especially at the present stage of work on the chemical weapons convention. This very active interest highlights more generally Sweden's significant contribution to advancing the objectives of the Conference on Disarmament.

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(Mr. Andersson, Sweden)

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In one area, this Conference has in recent years shown that it is capable of generating considerable progress. The current negotiations on a convention to ban chemical weapons could lead to the first global, fully verifiable, disarmament treaty. Intricate legal and technical problems are tackled at these negotiations. New ground has to be charted. When the convention enters into force a whole category of weapons of mass destruction is to be destroyed and eliminated, together with relevant production facilities.

The political implications of these prospects can escape no one. The early and successful conclusion of a convention on chemical weapons would be a weighty demonstration of the capacity of this multilateral forum to handle politically and technically complex problems. It would strengthen the confidence of Governments in the multilateral approach to security. Momentum must not be lost. Chemical weapons have been used in armed conflict being fought at this very moment. Further, the production and development of new generations of chemical weapons are under way. These facts highlight the urgency of the matter. They also underline the need for a serious effort to achieve universal adherence to a convention.