

(Mr. de la Baume, France)

the destruction of stocks of chemical weapons". The reservations and questions put forward by the representative of the USSR seem to us above all evidence of a certain misunderstanding about the interpretation to be placed on our proposals. It would seem, therefore, that a few clarifications are required.

First of all, in his statement the representative of the Soviet Union said, and I quote, "We naturally proceed from the premise that the order of destruction must be based on the principle of undiminished security of States during the entire destruction process, as has already been agreed in annex IV, section II". And he added, "the specific conclusions drawn from this general premise in document CD/757 lead neither to the conclusion of a convention, nor to the securing of security".

For our part, we proceed from the idea that, to be credible, the convention must guarantee security to all States parties from its entry into force, and not just future security once all chemical weapons have been done away with. The order of destruction of stocks is, everyone agrees, of crucial importance in this regard. But the timetable must not lead to a situation where the countries possessing the greatest quantities of chemical weapons were entitled to keep a stock of such weapons for at least 10 years whereas others would be prohibited from possessing such weapons from the moment the convention came into force.

Moreover, it is clear that nothing guarantees that the States which are the main possessors of chemical weapons will not cease destroying their stocks. Regrettable as it may be, such an eventuality cannot be ruled out. We must therefore bear in mind the consequences that would stem for the security of States parties both from a withdrawal of the aforementioned States from the Convention and from a breach on their part that, if unredressed, would lead other parties to exercise their right of withdrawal.

To avoid such a situation, which would evidently be extremely detrimental to security interests, we, as you know, propose keeping virtually until the end of the 10-year period -- the extension of which cannot, moreover, be absolutely ruled out -- a militarily significant but minimal stock. That stock would not in any event represent more than a very small fraction of the stocks currently held by the countries possessing the greatest quantities of chemical weapons and the convention provides that these will be kept until the tenth year.

Later in his statement, the representative of the Soviet Union said that he saw in our proposals, and I quote, "a call for the legalized build-up and proliferation of chemical weapons". This criticism seems to us to be groundless.

Why? Because, if we analyse the situation, we find that, as the draft convention now stands, there is, in fact, no incentive for countries wishing to keep open the option of a chemical capability to accede to the convention. The fact that stocks would be destroyed only after the 10-year period could even encourage them to defer their own accession for that long.