

through amendment the 1925 Geneva Protocol which prohibits the use in war of chemical weapons; as well there were many very good reasons why attention and effort should not be diverted from the negotiations in Geneva of a total abolition of chemical weapons to attempts to improve upon an instrument which only addresses a part of the problem. So then, what could be "done?"

International attention could be focussed on chemical weapons in a way that had not been done since their use in the First World War and the preparations to defend against their possible use in the Second. More than that, by suggesting that participation at the Conference be at the Foreign Minister level, the organizers could be certain that the highest levels of governments and their supporting staffs would be seized with the horrors of the use of chemical weapons, with the dangers posed by their existence and proliferation, and with the important issues still waiting to be negotiated to a conclusion in the Conference on Disarmament on a convention to abolish chemical weapons. As a political event, the Paris Conference was a very substantial success in that many more people are now informed about at least some aspects of the above-mentioned issues. Surely, many would say it must have "done" more than that, and so it did, although such are not the things to capture headlines.

The Conference concluded with a short but significant Final Declaration — a political statement — to which all 149 participating states agreed. Reaching such a consensus is an achievement in itself. To this, however, must be added the fact that the two main objectives of the Conference were achieved:

— the participating states (most of which were parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, but some of which were not) solemnly affirmed their commitments not to use chemical weapons and condemned such use, and, in this regard, they recognized the importance and continuing validity of the 1925 Geneva Protocol; and

— they stressed the necessity and urgency of concluding, at an early date, a Convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons, and on their destruction, and called upon all states to become a party to it as soon as it is concluded.

In addition to these, there were two other substantive points in the Final Declaration:

— while awaiting the conclusion and entry into force of a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons, it was deemed necessary for each state to exercise restraint and to act responsibly in accordance with the purpose of the Final Declaration; and

— the participating states confirmed their full support for the United Nations as a framework and instrument for exercising vigilance with respect to the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, mentioning, in particular, their full support for the Secretary-General in carrying out investigations in the event of alleged violations of the Geneva Protocol.

Such a call for restraint and responsible action could be seen to be addressed to states contemplating the acquisition or production of chemical weapons, while not ignoring that the desired end-result to negotiations in Geneva would also be the destruction of existing stockpiles. It also encompasses actions taken by countries such as Canada to ensure that their industry not contribute to any use of chemical weapons. The expression of support for the United Nations and its Secretary-General was more than a simple *pro forma* nod in that direction and was seen by many as intended to provide advance notice of support for stronger timely action.

Often at such gatherings, as important as what is agreed is what is avoided, and this was certainly the case at the Paris Conference. Some participants would have liked to see the agenda broadened to include, for example, the discussion of nuclear weapons in relation to chemical weapons, particular regional concerns, and a condemnation of particular states. These were all subjects on which such a short conference could only find disagreement and

irresolvable dissension. Although many national speeches addressed such matters in the general debate, moderation prevailed in the Committee of the Whole which was tasked with negotiating a consensus Final Declaration. There have been recent examples of international conferences which ended inconclusively due to the inability to maintain focus, and it is to the credit of all concerned that such an outcome was avoided at this Conference. As it is hoped the above discussion demonstrates, the Final Declaration is definitely not the lowest common denominator upon which some might have insisted.

The Final Declaration will undoubtedly become a new and forceful reference point against which progress in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament will be measured. Looking forward to the conclusion of the negotiations and the opening for signature of a comprehensive prohibition on chemical weapons, the consensus Final Declaration will be a powerful argument in promoting the early accession to and the globality of the convention. Finally, in the tragic event of any future use of chemical weapons, this consensus Final Declaration will be supportive of decisive action by the international community.

These are all important political achievements, and all participating states can derive considerable satisfaction from having contributed in some way to the successful outcome. Certainly, foremost among these would be the French Government and its officials who prepared the way through extensive — some might say exhaustive — consultations beforehand. Nevertheless, there is always the element of the unknown at such gatherings, and these were managed with tremendous skill. The president of the Conference (Mr. Roland Dumas of France) and the president of the Committee of the Whole (Mr. Kalevi Sorsa of Finland) were ably supported in their efforts by competent French officials and support staff. The UNESCO staff too provided sterling support throughout the Conference. The result is that 1989 has gotten off to a good start in the field of multilateral diplomacy, with promising indications in other areas as well. □