

(Mr. Kozyrev, Russian Federation)

Now, Mr. President, let me come back to the principal and most urgent task before the Conference: the completion of the negotiations on the total prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons. What are now beginning to acquire special significance in the negotiations are the economic factors connected with compliance with the obligations under this agreement. This is quite natural since the Convention, unlike any other previously concluded multilateral disarmament agreements, will affect the broadest sectors of the economy. That is why Russia believes that it is extremely important that, while effectively blocking the roads to possession of chemical weapons, the Convention should take into account the legitimate economic interests of the parties to it and also be "economical" in the sphere of verification.

In particular, there are serious doubts whether the complete destruction of former chemical weapons production facilities would be advisable. Especially in view of our current economic difficulties, we believe that it would be more justified to leave open the possibility of utilizing some of the equipment and buildings of such former facilities for the purposes of peaceful production, subject of course, to the elimination of equipment directly connected with the production and filling of chemical weapons and the existence of other safeguards, including international verification that would reliably preclude any attempt to reconvert such facilities to activities prohibited under the Convention.

I shall not hide the fact that Russia faces extremely difficult problems in connection with the destruction of chemical weapons. It was not Russia that took the decisions which resulted in the presence on its territory of 40,000 tons of toxic substances that are difficult to eliminate, although we have assumed full responsibility for their destruction.

Russia possesses the technology required for the destruction of chemical weapons. The main problem is obtaining the consent of the population and local authorities for the construction of the necessary facilities. I think that international cooperation and some help from abroad could play a role in resolving these problems. Such cooperation could be instrumental in guaranteeing the ecological cleanness of the destruction process and in creating incentives among the local population for having such facilities nearby, etc. We would support the idea of creating a kind of "ecopolis" in areas where destruction facilities might be established.

It is necessary for all States ultimately to accede to the future Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. This is favoured by the momentous change that has occurred in the world situation. Fears that participation in the Convention might have negative effects on security are lessening. The guarantees of the Security Council are becoming more effective. It is now working as was envisaged by the founders of the United Nations; that, in any case, is how things are moving. Russia intends to so participate in this work as to make a weighty contribution to the strengthening of universal security. Of course, in all these matters we are cooperating most closely with other States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.