

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

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We wish to express our satisfaction at the way in which negotiations on chemical weapons have progressed in the Conference. We wish to express our gratitude to Ambassador Cromartie of the United Kingdom for the major advances made under his Chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. We also wish to express appreciation at the way in which Ambassador Ekéus of Sweden has been chairing the Ad Hoc Committee since our work began this year. We are sure that under his able leadership it will be possible to move forward to the final results.

Everything appears to suggest that the conditions are ripe for specific results to be achieved quite quickly. Over recent months there has clearly been considerably more flexibility in the position of the Soviet Union, especially with regard to the régime of supervision and verification that will have to govern the implementation of the Convention when it enters into force.

The Conference is also facing up to the challenge resulting from the decision by the United States Government, and endorsed by the U.S. Congress, to begin producing binary chemical weapons in the autumn of this year if no agreement has been reached by then on the elimination of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons. Given this prospect, there is no alternative to speeding up the on-going negotiations both at the bilateral level and within this Conference.

However, we should like to share with the members of the Conference a concern prompted by the negotiations being carried out on the draft treaty for the prohibition of chemical weapons. It is clear that the question of verification is decisive, and the fate of the treaty, or indeed of any disarmament treaty, hinges on it. We have the impression, however, that the endeavour praiseworthy as it may be, to set up a verification mechanism that would be as perfect as possible is leading to the design of a tremendously complex structure, the operation of which would be very costly. We fear that the financial obligations which would derive from the cost of the operation of the verification system for the treaty will be so high that finally very few countries will be in a position to defray them, with the result being that the number of countries willing to be parties to the treaty will be very small, which in turn will limit the effectiveness of the instrument.

It is important therefore to bear in mind the experience of the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which to some extent is serving as a model for the verification structure of the future treaty on the prohibition of chemical weapons. The safeguards system is relatively simple to operate. What is more, its field of action is very restricted and it has a special financing mechanism which lightens the burden on the developing countries. Even so, many developing countries have serious difficulties in meeting their financial obligations relating to the safeguards system. The prevailing world economic situation would seem to make it even