

(Mr. Issraelyan, USSR)

Broadly, we associate ourselves with those delegations which have expressed concern over the intensification of the arms race and the aggravation of international tension, on the one hand, and the ineffectiveness of the Committee's work on the other. Indeed, the incapacity of the Committee on Disarmament to fulfil its mandate as the sole multilateral negotiating forum is particularly striking against the background of the acute aggravation of the international situation and the heightened danger of the outbreak of a global nuclear war.

If there have been any positive results of the Committee's work in 1982, these, in our view, relate mainly to the problem of the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons. As many heads of delegations pointed out at the second special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament and also here in this Committee, the submission by the Soviet Union of a draft text of "Basic provisions of a convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction" represented a very positive contribution to progress in the negotiations on this question. Under the skilful guidance of Ambassador Sujka, the representative of Poland, concrete negotiations on a wide range of issues relating to a future convention were successfully started within the Committee. The work done in the various contact groups set up on Ambassador Sujka's initiative -- in spite, it may be said, of the objections of certain delegations -- and the Chairman's document containing a consolidated text of compromise wordings of the elements of the future convention will undoubtedly provide a useful basis for future negotiations. Nevertheless, we cannot be fully satisfied even with the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons. We are coming to the very definite conclusion that certain States are in no hurry over these negotiations. It looks as if their successful conclusion might frustrate certain plans for the creation of new types of chemical weapons. We regret that the Committee failed to reach agreement on a deadline for the completion of the negotiations and that by interrupting our work for several months we are, as it were, breaking off in mid-sentence.

I should like now to comment on the activities of the Committee on Disarmament from a wider viewpoint in a historical perspective, so to speak. Not a single agreement in the sphere of the limitation of the arms race and disarmament has been drafted in the Committee since 1976. The expansion of the Committee's membership and the adoption of rules of procedure for its work in 1979 failed to change things for the better. Moreover, although a number of drafts have been submitted to the Committee in recent years, some have not been considered at all while in the case of others it has proved impossible to reach final agreement owing to the attempts of certain delegations to link them artificially with various other issues.

The reasons for this situation are well known. Both we and many other delegations have spoken about them at this session and at earlier sessions of the Committee. It is more and more often being said, as was the case at the second special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, that the Committee on Disarmament is failing to fulfil the task set before it. We agree with those judgements. Experience has shown that, in a number of cases, the Committee is not only not facilitating negotiations but is in fact becoming a kind of brake, an obstacle to negotiations. The most negative aspects of the Committee's activities which have become apparent in recent years are, in our view, the following.

First. The starting of negotiations in the Committee on the most acute problem of our time -- the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament -- has been blocked because of the position of the United States of America and certain other States. For the same reason, the Committee has also been unable to embark on