

Consultative Committee following a complaint, could be the denunciation of the treaty. This seems to be the balance of the respective legal obligations.

On these difficult issues, for which greater serenity should prevail in the negotiations, we consider it essential that dialogue be resumed between the two major Powers possessing chemical weapons. We welcomed the offer made by Vice-President Bush for the holding of bilateral consultations on this subject with the Soviet Union.

Belgium believes that bilateral consultations between the Soviet Union and the United States on disarmament are a demonstration of those two States' awareness of their outstanding responsibilities for the maintenance of peace. These negotiations cannot fail to benefit multilateral negotiations, and such bilateral consultations between the Soviet Union and the United States are therefore always to be encouraged, in our opinion.

I have devoted the bulk of this statement to the question of the prohibition of chemical weapons. I should nevertheless like to say a few words concerning the nuclear-test ban, and I am a little saddened and surprised that I am, I believe, the first speaker here to refer to the statement made here on 12 June by Mr. Shintaro Abe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

I think that if we are realistic we all know that an agreement on a complete nuclear-test ban cannot be achieved today. The Japanese proposal for the prohibition of underground nuclear tests whose strength exceeds a verifiability threshold could constitute a temporary evolving measure whereby we would gradually draw closer to the ideal objective of a complete ban.

Belgium endorses the motives underlying the Japanese proposal: to pursue the process leading to a complete nuclear test ban, and go beyond the contradiction between verification and prohibition which reminds me of the story of the chicken and the egg.

From the same standpoint, Belgium supports the proposal of its Western partners to set up an ad hoc committee whose terms of reference would enable to consider all aspects of a complete test ban with a view to the negotiation of a treaty on this issue. We believe that in its present wording the draft mandate would make it perfectly possible to consider the Japanese proposal, with all the interest attaching to an initiative put forward by the only State which knows what a nuclear attack signifies, and which has always expressed this knowledge with stunning dignity.

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Mr. President, in my statement today, I will begin my explanation of how the United States draft convention addresses the last of the four major issues involved in a comprehensive and effective chemical weapons ban. This is the vital issue of verification.

Chemical weapons are much too dangerous a means of warfare to permit any uncertainty in an agreement banning these weapons. An agreement with the objective of banning chemical weapons that is not effectively verifiable would be less than worthless. It would, in fact, be dangerous. If such an agreement entered into force, there would be inevitable and continuous concern and uncertainty whether the other parties to the agreement were living up to their commitments. The uncertainties and lack of confidence that would flow from such an agreement would create tensions in the international community and could weaken confidence in other existing and proposed arms control agreements. This situation must and can be avoided.

While acknowledging that effective verification provisions are necessary for a successful chemical weapons ban, we must acknowledge at the same time that negotiation of such effective verification provisions will not be easy. Chemical weapons are not