

(Mr. Batsanov, USSR)

The Soviet Union considers the forthcoming 1991 Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention to be an important event. We believe that forum should assess the results achieved since 1986 in increasing the effectiveness of the Convention and agree upon further measures to strengthen the régime established under the Convention. The Soviet Union intends actively to participate in efforts to ensure the success of the Conference and is ready favourably to consider any constructive ideas and proposals from other countries aimed at strengthening this very important international agreement in the field of actual disarmament.

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Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America):

... As the Conference on Disarmament winds up its 1990 session, I want to take a moment to look at the chemical weapons negotiations and share some observations about where we have been and where we have yet to go. When I first arrived here in Geneva, in January this year, there seemed to me to be great optimism and enthusiasm that a chemical weapons ban was within sight. All of us were transfixed by the political changes sweeping across Europe. Arms control and security negotiations, so long tended, were finally beginning to bear fruit. Conclusion of a strategic arms reduction treaty seemed imminent. Agreement on significant reductions in conventional arms in Europe was within grasp. On chemical weapons, the prospect of a bilateral agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union could be seen on the horizon. All these events combined to fuel expectations that 1990 might also be the year we gave real impetus to the multilateral chemical weapons convention.

Progress has, however, not been what we had hoped for this year. For the United States part, our review of chemical weapons issues was only concluded this month. But many others in this room contributed to the delay as well and, as the United States made its conclusions known on several vital questions, a certain atmosphere of recrimination and finger-pointing replaced the dispassionate discussion of national perspectives that should be the medium of serious negotiation. We are likely to conclude this session of our Conference, I regret to say, on a sour note.

Actually, we did get many things done. Much of our progress centred on legal and institutional issues. Development of the two-tiered approach for changing and amending the treaty was significant. To be effective the convention cannot be frozen in time. It needs to be flexible and mutable, adaptable to advances both in science and in verification technology. At the same time, it needs to be able to withstand erosion or elimination of the core of the treaty - those fundamental obligations which will make the convention a truly comprehensive ban. The work we accomplished here this year ensures that the convention will be able to do both.