

(Mr. Ekéus, Sweden)

I would now like to turn to the question of chemical weapons. Work in the Conference on Disarmament on a chemical weapons convention has continued in 1988 against a backdrop of intensified and escalated use of these weapons of mass destruction. The situation is serious. We are faced with a threat of further proliferation of chemical weapons and further development of chemical warfare agents and methods for their dissemination. Recent United Nations reports on the continued use of these weapons in the conflict between Iran and Iraq, as well as other reports in its aftermath, demonstrate in a tragic way the importance of concluding our work without further delay. A comprehensive ban on chemical weapons would, by its effectiveness and globality, insure us all against the resurgence of chemical warfare, from the very date of its entry into force. This is what is expected by the Conference on Disarmament. Our work must be inspired by a new sense of urgency to address and solve all outstanding issues. For Sweden, the completion of a chemical weapons convention is a major priority of the Conference. That goal is within reach. Our success would also imbue the multilateral disarmament process with new confidence, with a new sense of purpose.

However, and much to our regret, we must note that our work in 1988 has fallen short of the repeated calls for renewed or even continuing urgency. Some important issues have hardly been addressed; solving others has taken unnecessary time and effort. We are conscious that substantive progress has taken place in bilateral work between the two major possessors of chemical weapons. We welcome this progress and are acutely aware of its importance, as an illustration of how bilateral and multilateral efforts can support and reinforce each other. We would however urge the two major possessors of chemical weapons to intensify their efforts and to present their results and agreements in a form which would facilitate their transfer to the multilateral context, i.e. into the "rolling text".

Yet if we feel frustrated by the slow pace of our negotiations, it would not be fair to paint too gloomy a picture. During the present session the Committee, under the steady and patient chairmanship of Ambassador Sujka of Poland, has made some substantive progress. The efforts and the dedication of the three working group chairmen, Mr. Cima of Czechoslovakia, Mr. Macedo of Mexico and Mr. Numata of Japan, have not been in vain. The report which the Conference is presenting to the General Assembly contains valuable new elements.

I will mention some of them, if I may. The Chairman of Group A was able to bring to the report a well-balanced, carefully drafted text on article XI, "Economic and technological development". His success in this endeavour was in part made possible by the flexibility shown by members of the Group of 21, for which this article is of special importance. We regret, however, that the present text of article XI has not been included in appendix I of the report. The arguments that the text is at an early stage of elaboration and that no