

(Mr. van den Broek, the Netherlands)

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My fifth point concerns the trend in arms control towards the complete elimination of whole categories of weapons. The biological weapons convention provides a first example and it will, we all hope, be followed by a comprehensive and verifiable ban on chemical weapons. In the case of chemical weapons we are moving from a prohibition of use to a complete ban on development, production and possession. The example of the Biological Weapons Convention shows that a third phase might be contemplated as well, in which further confidence-building measures, notably the exchange of information on research, might help further to ensure that no development of a certain type of weapons is taking place.

As far as nuclear weapons are concerned, we surely are still far from negotiating these weapons away. However, as I pointed out, we are moving to a possible ban on virtually a whole category of these weapons, and we hope that progress will soon be made on other categories as well.

An important condition for success in arms talks is that the forum one chooses should be well suited for negotiations on the weapon system concerned. This particular forum, the Conference on Disarmament, has a long agenda. A realistic assessment of the agenda, its achievements and prospects shows that chemical weapons offer the best chance of success. The CW negotiations therefore deserve, in our view, the priority they receive in the practical day-to-day work in Geneva.

Agreement on a ban on chemical weapons, would serve as a unique illustration of the role the Conference on Disarmament can play as the single world-wide multilateral negotiating body. Given the long-standing abhorrence of these weapons shared by the world community, the CD now faces the historic task of bringing about a treaty banning the production, possession, development and use of these weapons. This task is a great challenge, but certainly not an insurmountable one. Negotiating history shows great creativity and perseverance toward this end. As in the past, the Netherlands is anxious to make its contribution on that score.

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