

(Mr. Andreotti, Italy)

Italy intends to work for peace and disarmament, at a time which it considers to be important for the future of mankind. We deem that, at this stage, we must specially intensify our efforts where our contribution can be more direct and immediate. I refer to those multilateral negotiations dealing with issues of primary importance for international stability: the negotiations on conventional forces, and on the global elimination of chemical weapons.

We have, therefore, come here to express our hope and to urge that the result attained on 8 December by the United States of America and the Soviet Union on intermediate nuclear missiles can also be achieved in the field of chemical weapons: the global elimination of an entire class of armaments. The Washington Treaty - and it is worth while stressing it once again - is of a significance which goes far beyond the number of weapons destroyed. It marks the reversal of a trend, signalling as it does not the mere cessation of the endless growth of highly destructive weapons - which throughout the last four decades appeared to be almost inevitable - but a significant reduction in the number of offensive systems threatening Europe. For the first time balance has been restored at a lower level and not, according to the easier ways of the past, at a higher one.

This development is of enormous political significance and importance. In fact, from a general viewpoint, new trends seem to be emerging in the context of East-West relations - with possible positive repercussions on the continuation of the disarmament process. From what I would term a more technical viewpoint, the Treaty can serve as a model for ongoing or forthcoming negotiations in other disarmament fields, within a bilateral context as well as a multilateral one.

Allow me, at this juncture, to make a special reference to three concepts which I would consider to be part and parcel of the East-West dialogue on arms reductions, and which may be also extended to the field of chemical weapons:

Asymmetry in reductions, all the more important in the case of chemical weapons, as the initial composition of each party's arsenals - however assessed - seems to us anything but identical,

(continued)