

(Mr. Houlliez, Belgium)

distinction between substantive problems which can be solved only by means of policy decisions often involving compromises between two different overall approaches (for example multilateralism and bilateralism) and technical details which are of undoubted importance but could be resolved by the preparatory committee or elaborated upon after the convention enters into force. My delegation is afraid that an over-technical approach involving the creation of too many study groups will confirm the risk of concentrating too much time and effort on non-essential aspects. We must also bear in mind that the prime aim of our negotiations is to produce a convention laying down a complete and universal ban on chemical weapons once and for all. This objective has a vertical dimension, namely, the destruction of all chemical weapon stocks belonging to a given State, and the destruction of its CW production facilities, and also a horizontal dimension, namely, the universal nature of the effective, complete and verifiable renunciation of chemical weapons. Belgium believes that we should be able to expect that both dimensions of this objective will be achieved.

For Belgium it is essential for States to state unequivocally their commitment to renounce chemical weapons completely within the context of the future treaty which will provide the legal framework for this commitment. We have always been aware that this treaty would achieve its objective in all its dimensions only if the international community, by acceding to it in large numbers, demonstrates its joint resolve to prove that nothing can any longer justify the maintenance of the CW option. The final aim of our work is not so much to conclude a treaty as to provide ourselves with an effective legal instrument which has every chance of leading us towards the effective, complete and verifiable renunciation of chemical weapons. To achieve this aim, three crucial stages have to be traversed successfully: the conclusion of the treaty, its opening for signature and ratification by all States, which will be the gauge of its universality, and the expiry of the transitional period when the aim of the treaty will have to be achieved in both the vertical and the horizontal dimensions.

In this Conference we are concentrating on the first of these stages in order to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the subsequent stages are successfully negotiated. When working on the text of the convention, our Conference must also be aware of the need to reconcile a system which provides as many guarantees of compliance as possible, so as to build confidence, and operation at a reasonable cost, which will enable all countries, great or small, to participate on an equal footing. The verification system has to be sufficiently close-knit to discourage any inclination to violate the provisions by the risk of being caught out in prohibited activities, but it would be too much to seek absolute guarantees. If the risks of violation are greater for chemical weapons because of the many facilities which can produce them and the problems of detecting them, as compared with nuclear weapons, we must also be sufficiently realistic to acknowledge that the numbers of victims in a nuclear conflict would be much higher. We therefore find it illogical to provide for verification systems - and I am thinking in particular of ad hoc inspections of undeclared facilities - whose cost might represent 10 or more times the budget of the IAEA inspection operation, that is to say about \$25 million per year. Finally, I would like to say that we should pursue our efforts on chemical weapons with the aim of concluding a convention providing for a total ban in the near future because, as several colleagues