

(Mr. Wegener, Federal Republic of Germany)

will be included in the future convention, and that the verification system will also cover chemical weapons use. We still have to work out a formulation which will accomplish the inclusion of the use prohibition in the convention in correct relationship to the present rules of international law. One possible solution could consist in a proviso which would juxtapose an unambiguous prohibition of the use of chemical weapons and the acknowledgement that such provision would reaffirm and strengthen the interdiction of the Geneva Protocol of 1925. In the view of my delegation it is regrettable that the Geneva Protocol of 1925 has, by virtue of the manifold reservations attached to it, de facto degenerated into a prohibition of the first use of chemical weapons only. It would have been a noble task for the Committee on Disarmament to eliminate the many ambiguities which result from the multitude of reservations to the Geneva Protocol by a constructive further development of law in the direction of an absolute interdiction of use. It is worthwhile to remind ourselves that such an evolution was in fact called for by the Geneva Disarmament Conference in the 1930s. It is therefore legitimate to ask whether the issue of the further evolution of international law in terms of a categorical prohibition of use -- if indeed a consensus of States to this effect cannot be reached during the current round of negotiations -- should be assigned to a later review conference which could deal with this problem, say, at the conclusion of the chemical weapons stock destruction phase.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that my delegation strongly advocates a negotiation procedure which tackles problems in a manner more clearly structured, gradual, and better adapted to the priorities. This would be a more promising path towards the solution of outstanding problems. Simultaneous work in all areas over-extends the Working Group and the contact groups. This, in our view, is one important lesson of the past couple of weeks. For many years now the Committee on Disarmament has been facing the challenge of working out a comprehensive and verifiable prohibition of chemical weapons, aimed at the elimination of this entire weapons category for all time. To this day, we have not responded to the challenge as we should. I would like to appeal to all delegations, in a solemn fashion, to make the utmost effort so that the Committee does not lose its credibility in this crucial domain.