

(Mr. Morel, France)

I should also like to thank all those who gave me such a warm welcome when I arrived at this Conference. I was struck by the spirit of co-operation and friendship here, quite apart from our substantive differences of view. You may rest assured, Mr. President, that I shall always take part in the work of this Conference in the same spirit.

As we know, the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons is at present working on issues relating to non-production of chemical weapons. The French delegation wishes to make an active contribution to the discussions on a topic to which it attaches great importance, and therefore now has the honour to introduce today document CD/747, entitled "Non-production of chemical weapons", which spells out the details of the preliminary remarks expressed by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean Bernard Raimond, on this subject a month ago, on 19 February, in this chamber.

The starting-point for our approach is that it has gradually become clear from discussions on article 6 of the convention that it is not desirable to build a convention that would be perfect for the present but which would be threatened with obsolescence in the near future and would therefore become increasingly inoperative. We do not think that it is useful to establish a definitive schedule of substances to be prohibited, with their attendant régimes of verification. The convention must obviously be comprehensive and binding for everything with which we are familiar, but precisely in order to ensure the full observance and authority of the convention we must also be able to make provision for all that at present remains hypothetical, little-known or indeed unknown. How, for example, can we regulate, without harming the legitimate interests of each country, the potential inherent in industries that are producing for permissible requirements substances that could be diverted for weapons purposes? How can the scientific and technological progress which will certainly come about, both in the chemical industry and on the control and verification side, be taken into account? Such questions cannot but convince us that, while we must be absolutely firm in everything relating to the goals, principles and ground rules, flexibility is essential in the application of the convention for everything that is not yet fully identified.

Thus, our document identifies the areas where, taking this evolutionary perspective I have outlined, developments may well occur.

With regard to the schedules of substances to be controlled, the essential and most difficult task is to define the toxicity criterion. Here we have to set aside the idea of attaining theoretical perfection and rather seek agreement on a definition and procedures of acquisition that are acceptable to everybody and could serve as a reference.

With regard to super-toxic lethal chemicals which are not chemical weapons, we do not think that, given their characteristics, it would be useful to draw up an exhaustive list at this stage. What is essential is to establish definitional criteria to assess the possibility of any particular substance becoming a chemical weapon, and to set a production threshold over which its manufacture must be declared.