

(Mr. Rasaputram, Sri Lanka)

cannot argue that the accession of militarily insignificant countries, which would in any case not pose a threat to the convention, is of less significance than a "capable" country remaining outside the convention.

It is in this context that my delegation would like to commend for serious consideration the pertinent observations of the delegation of Argentina concerning the need for the verification regime to remain commercially neutral and the importance of avoiding a dual regime for civil chemical trade once the convention enters into force. Developing countries which seek to develop their, as yet, elementary civilian chemical industry will have to weigh the security benefits of the convention against the costs and burdens not only of national implementation measures and international verification measures but also of the economic implications of possible dual regimes. The justified motives of devising an adequately comprehensive verification regime should not take us to the extreme of legislating for every eventuality. This would overburden the convention with an expensive verification regime that could go beyond the scope of the convention. Financing of such a regime can entail considerable financial obligations for developing countries. It will therefore be of importance to agree on a viable balance of verification burdens, bearing in mind that letter-perfect verification is neither feasible nor needed.

We feel that the opportunity now exists for the CD to strive towards firming up what could be the Conference's first conclusive output, since its inception over a decade ago. The consensus that was recently achieved on article I was the culmination of a long process. It also demonstrated the dynamism of multilateral negotiations and the fact that debilitating attributes sometimes conferred upon multilateral bodies are not justified. In fact the consensus on article I proved the contrary. The initial draft text of a CW convention submitted to the CD some years ago was enriched and developed in a dynamic way by multilateral participation. The very basis of the new consensus, namely, the idea of including the use of CW in the main prohibition, did not figure in the initial proposal but was conceived and developed by this multilateral body. The CD has therefore proved that it can negotiate, even on issues concerning weapons of mass destruction, if and when it is enabled to do so. Among the many tragedies and ironies of the Gulf war, some would perceive a realization that the threat of mass destruction deriving from chemical weapons neither deterred war nor influenced the outcome of that war. If this is to be one among many lessons to be drawn from that tragic event, it is perhaps time for the CD to pay more focused attention to other priority items on our agenda dealing with a host of disarmament questions including the priority nuclear issues which have remained in a state of paralysis due to similar doctrinal considerations. Irrespective of the moral of the Gulf conflict experience, if it has presented us with an opportunity to eliminate an entire class of weapons of mass destruction, the CD has to seize that opportunity.