

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

"Momentum" is a notion that seems to evaporate on close inspection. The dynamics of these negotiations are complex. The ever greater risk of proliferation is at the same time an incentive and an increasingly formidable obstacle to successful completion of these negotiations. We believe that the time has come to strengthen the momentum in the CD negotiations. Next year we must really cut the knots in all major outstanding issues.

What we need is a consensus in which all or practically all relevant countries participate. A precondition for achieving such broad consensus is that chemical weapons must not, like a computer virus, spread all over the world. A definite halt to proliferation is only possible if there is at least a credible perspective of a comprehensive, effectively verifiable, global ban. Lingering doubts on whether or not such a ban is in the end politically and practically feasible may encourage threshold countries to "go chemical". The fact that these horrible weapons have recently been used, that the taboo was broken, may indeed lower the threshold ominously, that is of course if countries do not heed the Paris appeal and shy away from the ban.

It has been said before: the acquisition of chemical weapons is not a justifiable response to the possession or acquisition of nuclear or conventional weapons by other States. Chemical weapons do not provide reliable deterrence in a regional conflict situation. As Minister of State William Waldegrave of the United Kingdom said in his speech on 15 June, chemical weapons are likely to have a destabilizing effect on the local balance of power. An effectively verifiable ban is a matter of first priority, not only for obvious humanitarian reasons, but also because the world, as well as any subregion within it, will be safer without the destabilizing impact of these weapons.

It is against this background that we attach the greatest importance to full and effective participation in these negotiations by all countries. It would be a grave mistake if, contrary to the consensus conclusions of the Paris Conference, where all countries were invited to join the work, some countries were not admitted to the Conference.

Full participation in the negotiations means also that all delegations speak up. It is, for instance, important that all countries make clear whether or not chemical weapons are produced on their territory, whether chemical weapons belong to their weapons arsenals, or whether for other reasons chemical weapons are stocked on their territory.

I believe that the moment has also come for each and every delegation to take a position on important issues such as challenge inspections. Of course, it is understood that definite commitments can only be made when all pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have been put in place. But that is, in our view, not a reason to refrain from agreeing on a provisional basis on the main elements of a challenge inspection régime.

This leads me to ask two related questions. First: should we not, after important work still to be done on structure and details in the inter-sessional period, next year focus on resolving the major outstanding issues? And second: can we this year give expression to our consent more