

Mr. CROMARTIE (United Kingdom): Mr. President, my statement on 12 July was devoted to chemical weapons. This morning I wish to anticipate next week's agenda item by devoting my statement principally to New Weapons of Mass Destruction and Radiological Weapons. I intend, however, also to touch upon some other items on our agenda for this session.

My Government's view on the question of new weapons of mass destruction is well known. We have repeatedly stated, both here and at the United Nations, that the British Government believes that it would be most serious and regrettable if any new kinds of weapons of mass destruction were invented and deployed for use. But my delegation has noted, as others will have done, that although this subject has been on our agenda for many years no substantial evidence of any kind has been put forward to indicate that there are new types of weapons of mass destruction in prospect. There has been no solidly-based proposal for the prohibition of any specific kind of new weapon of mass destruction. In the absence of such a proposal, my delegation continues to oppose the negotiation of a comprehensive agreement on what would still be a hypothetical subject matter. Disarmament treaties need to be specific in scope and susceptible of verification if they are to command international confidence. A comprehensive agreement dealing with unspecified new weapons of mass destruction could not fulfil these requirements. Furthermore, the United Kingdom delegation made clear, as long ago as 1980 (CD/PV.81) that they saw no justification for the establishment of an expert group on this subject, in the absence of the identification of any new weapons of mass destruction or of the principles on which any new weapon of mass destruction might be based. No evidence has been produced since that time which inclines us to change this view. Many other delegations hold similar views.

It was therefore a matter of surprise to us that a group of socialist States should propose at the beginning of this year, in document CD/434, that an Ad Hoc Committee should be set up to deal not only with radiological weapons, according to well-established precedent, but also to negotiate with a view to preparing a draft comprehensive agreement in this field. Nothing, to our knowledge, had occurred which could lead any delegation to believe that such a proposal was more acceptable now than it had been in earlier years. The only result of this manoeuvre was to delay the setting up of the Ad Hoc Committee on Radiological Weapons until it was too late to embark on substantive work in the first half of our 1984 session. The responsibility for this delay must clearly rest with those delegations who made, and persisted with, this proposal to enlarge a hitherto uncontroversial mandate.

When I spoke on 26 August last year, I made clear the disappointment of my delegation at the lack of progress in the negotiations on radiological weapons during 1983. The intensive negotiations which were conducted in the Working Group last year did not result in an agreement on what we have to come to call the "traditional" radiological weapons treaty; and the discussion of the prohibition of attacks on nuclear facilities made no sensible progress towards any agreement on the general principles of which a future legal instrument might be based. We had hoped that the Conference would give guidance, as the Working Group's report put it, on "how best to make progress on the subject matter". This guidance was not, however, provided by the Conference, and our hopes of making systematic progress were further dashed by the procedural wrangle which marred the start of the Ad Hoc Committee's work. This procedural difficulty was emphasized by the introduction by the Swedish delegation of a draft treaty which once more concentrated attention on the question