

(Mr. Batsanov, USSR)

The Soviet delegation in its previous statement of 22 June expounded the basic approach of the Soviet Union to a broad range of disarmament issues in a wider context of creating a secure democratic world. Today I would like to elaborate in more detail on the problem which is in our view central to the work of the Conference, that is, the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons. It would hardly be an overstatement to say that we are living through a critical turning point in the negotiations, with all the controversies that are to be expected at such times.

To speak of the positive aspects, there is in particular the fact that the draft convention is in an advanced state of preparation. At the Conference held in Paris earlier this year, virtually all States assumed, at a high level, moral and political commitments in relation to the earliest conclusion of the convention. Many countries and groups of countries have recently stated, individually or jointly, their support for the cause of banning chemical weapons. The relevant provisions of the comprehensive arms control and disarmament concept adopted at the NATO summit in Brussels are very much welcome in this connection, and particularly the intention expressed in it by the NATO leaders of concluding at an early date a global, comprehensive and effectively verifiable treaty banning any chemical weapon, its development, production, storage or transfer. We also notice that the most recently published NATO documents seem to suggest that chemical weapons are not regarded as an integral element of deterrence, which in view of NATO's general philosophy of arms limitation raises hopes of a truly complete renunciation by all its members of this gruesome means of extermination. As for the Warsaw Treaty Organization, the leaders of the allied countries at their summit meeting held literally a few days ago in Bucharest called for efforts to speed up the preparation of an international convention on the general and complete prohibition of chemical weapons and destruction of their stocks.

Finally, among the positive elements we have are the restructuring of the negotiating process carried out under the skilful leadership of Ambassador Morel, the presence of a significantly greater number of observers at the negotiations, and the fact that progress towards a convention has gone beyond the limits of pure negotiations and reached a stage when a whole number of countries have started practical preparations for their participation in the future agreement.

On the other hand, during the spring session of 1989 and in the early days of the summer session, the multilateral negotiations failed to reach the desired tempo. We get the impression that external political stimulus is taking too long to be transformed into progress in negotiations which necessarily requires the readiness of every participant to take resolute steps and make bold compromises. A considerable portion of time this year was consumed by the discussion of technical details. In itself, this might be no bad thing, but even then we were often going round in circles. The devil is in the details, they say, and exorcizing him from wherever he might be always requires an extreme effort of will, which in our case, naturally, means political will. It is also needed to resolve some of the still outstanding