

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

• • •  
The Geneva and Reykjavik summits and the various statements which followed them, the developments in the bilateral disarmament negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union and the recent proposals on that subject are all factors whose impact is in the final analysis decisive and determines the way our work progresses.

We must fully grasp the possibilities of progress they offer, although these possibilities vary depending on whether we are talking about nuclear weapons, chemical weapons or outer space, the three major areas on which our concerns are focussed at present.

The current process of negotiation on chemical weapons is the best illustration of the success which the Conference can attain when it is in tune with the basic concerns of the major Powers.

Here my delegation would like to pay tribute to the former Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, Ambassador Cromartie of the United Kingdom, and to the present chairman, Ambassador Ekéus of Sweden, for so capably catching this favourable tide in order to speed up and intensify the work of the Committee and its working groups and thus quickly resolve a number of issues and open up prospects for settling many others.

Thus, the principles of on-site verification of the destruction of chemical weapons and of the destruction of production facilities for such weapons have for the first time been set down in the draft treaty.

In the field of challenge inspection, so crucial for the safety of the future convention, the negotiations have taken what we feel to be a promising turn, bearing in mind the earlier fundamental conflicts of views. In particular, the United Kingdom proposal contained in document CD/715 contributed to this favourable development which we hope will continue in the future. There seems to be a more widespread feeling that an ambitious solution is both necessary and attainable. Success in such an unprecedented undertaking as the verified elimination of a whole category of arms justifies unprecedented remedies. Belgium's preference goes to a set of rules which will be no less stringent in the constraints imposed upon any party faced with a request for inspection than the other obligations contained in the convention. Here we must avoid any discrimination amongst the parties depending on the importance of their military or economic potential, the size of their territory or any other reason. An important question facing us all is whether it can be left to a State party, whichever State party it may be, to determine in the final analysis whether a facility located on its territory comes under the convention or not.