

The CHAIRMAN (translated from French): I thank His Excellency Ambassador Issraelyan for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. In accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its 157th plenary meeting, I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Austria, His Excellency Ambassador Nettel.

Mr. NETTEL (Austria): Mr. Chairman, may I express my delegation's sincere satisfaction in seeing you assume the responsibility of guiding this Committee through its important work during the month of March. It gives me particular pleasure to welcome you, an eminent representative of our good neighbour, Italy, as Chairman of the Committee at this crucial stage in its work.

As regards the Chairman for the month of February, the representative of Iran, my delegation acknowledges with appreciation his efforts to overcome the procedural obstacles which are usually the prominent feature at the beginning of each year's session.

Taking the floor for the first time in the course of the 1982 session, I wish to put on record our gratitude that the Austrian delegation has again been allowed to participate in the meetings of the Committee on Disarmament and its subsidiary bodies.

By observing most attentively the work of the Committee and its working groups, my delegation demonstrated already last year its great interest in the work of this body. The representatives of Austria will not fail to intensify this learning process, the outcome of which will hopefully permit us to contribute actively to the future work to be undertaken in this forum.

My delegation is well aware that, according to the agreed schedule, the time for statements of a more general nature has already passed. With your kind indulgence, I shall nevertheless make some remarks of a more comprehensive character; this is of course due to the fact that non-member States obtained permission to make statements only a week ago.

So, permit me to look briefly into the past, upon which this new session of the Committee on Disarmament will have to build. The Austrian authorities have closely examined the 1981 report of the Committee and took note with satisfaction of some progress which was achieved regarding the prohibition of chemical weapons. Austria joined those States which welcomed this development during the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which, however, urged the Committee with no lesser degree of concern to continue sincere and meaningful negotiations on a convention prohibiting the development, production or stockpiling of all chemical weapons. My country, being located in one of the most sensitive areas of this globe, is conscious of the incredible danger it would encounter if such terrible weapons were to be used in its region. As a matter of fact, Austria itself has always been free of chemical weapons, by conviction and past experience, as well, later on, as a consequence of a legal commitment laid down in the State Treaty of 1955. We sincerely hope that the "Elements suggested by the Chairman", which are contained in last year's report, can soon be transformed into formal treaty provisions. Negotiations conducted in good faith and oriented towards an early conclusion should be one of the main tasks of the Committee during its 1982 session. In view of this over-all objective, we consider