

(Mr. Dhanapala, Sri Lanka)

Although some key issues of a future convention such as scope, definition and criteria remain to be solved, it is apparent that the major area of controversy lies in the subject area of Article IX. The Working Papers presented by the delegation of Pakistan [CD/664] and the delegation of the United Kingdom [CD/715] in an obvious attempt to reconcile the divergent perceptions on this issue, are useful contributions which merit careful study. In this connection it is of paramount importance for the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons to act in unison to consolidate the achievements of Working Group C, which performed useful work under its able Chairman, Mr. Wisnomoerti of Indonesia. In Annex III of its report on Article IX especially formulations presented for a procedure for requesting a fact finding mission could be considered as a valuable point of departure for future work.

In this context may I draw the attention of the Conference to some relevant issues that may be important in the resolution of the complex issues of verification and compliance. It has been generally acknowledged that absolute transparency within a chemical weapons convention is neither necessary nor realistic. The military significance of chemical weapons to the nuclear-weapon States dependent on the strategy of nuclear deterrence is obviously not a core issue. And yet to insist on the most rigorous standards of verification for these weapons raises doubts on their relevance to actual security needs. An intrusive and elaborate system of challenge inspection is redundant in the light of the efficacy of certain national technical means available to the two major alliances, some of which have been used adequately to monitor existing treaties. A rigid strait-jacket system of challenge verification could become politically destabilizing in a context of a tense and sensitive political climate not only between major alliances but more so in regional situations where accusations and counter accusations can become the order of the day. Such a verification machinery will be difficult to operate in the best of times.

These reasons, inter alia, aptly demonstrate the need for compromise and realism. We are confident that a package which could include elements involved in the various verification methods propose, viz. "systematic continuous", "continuous random", "continuous regular", "fact finding", "on challenge" etc., could be reasonably put together if the political will exists to install an adequate system of verification to ensure compliance. After all it is clear that when there is no political will States could even withdraw or implicitly violate existing Conventions.

There are other important issues, albeit not as central as the verification issue, on which the attention of the CW Committee should be focused sooner rather than later. The question of herbicides has all along had a relevance in the negotiations of a chemical weapons ban. However this important question has not been addressed at all during this session. Ever since herbicides were used as chemical agents in hostilities, the danger of its use again is not the remote possibility that we can dismiss. A simple prohibition clause prohibiting the use of herbicides as a method of warfare against an adversary within the convention on chemical weapons or as an integral part of the convention will certainly act as a deterrent for its use in hostilities in future satisfying the legitimate concerns of countries which depend so vitally on agriculture, the tree crop sector and natural cover.