

(Mr. Antyukhin, USSR)

... In connection with the decision just adopted by the Conference, to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons and appoint the head of the Soviet delegation, S.B. Batsanov, as Chairman of the Committee for the coming year, the Soviet delegation would like to express its deepest gratitude to all delegations for the great confidence that they have placed in us.

S.B. Batsanov has asked me to convey to you that he regards this appointment first and foremost as a recognition of the role which the Soviet Union is playing both in the talks aimed at the complete prohibition of chemical weapons and in the efforts being made by the international community in other fields of arms limitation and disarmament. He has asked me to assure all the distinguished representatives that he will make every effort to ensure that 1991 is a year of substantial progress towards a decision on what we view as one of the most urgent items on the agenda of the Conference - saving mankind from the threat of chemical warfare. The urgency of this task is confirmed by the dramatic events which are now occurring in the Persian Gulf region. The delegation of the USSR listened carefully to the substantive statement made by the distinguished Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati. It contains a number of points which all of us should give serious thought to. Furthermore, the war in the Gulf, as we see it, clearly demonstrates that we are seriously behind schedule in drafting a comprehensive convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons. In these circumstances it is obvious that all of us should once again take a critical look at our fundamental attitude to the convention and take the necessary political decisions to ensure full and unreserved support for the future convention on the part of all participants in the negotiations. This is the guarantee of success.

Unfortunately, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, S.B. Batsanov, will be away from Geneva until Monday for previously planned consultations. He asked me to say on his behalf that in order to perform effectively the functions of Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, he intends to co-operate extensively with all interested delegations participating in the talks both as members of the Conference and as non-members. The goal of such co-operation, as he sees it, is to try to lay the foundations which on the one hand will contribute to the achievement of a generally acceptable compromise on outstanding issues connected with the draft convention, reflecting a balance between the interests of the different parties in the negotiations, and on the other hand will guarantee the effectiveness and universality of the future convention.

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