

(Mr. de la Gorce, France)

During our 1982 session, with two additional weeks of intensive work in January 1983, the Working Group on Chemical Weapons achieved significant results. The "contact groups" method introduced by Mr. Sujka -- and I should like to take this opportunity to offer him the thanks of my delegation for the work he has done as Chairman of the Working Group on Chemical Weapons -- gave rise to an intense exchange of ideas resulting in a clearer definition of the problems and of possible solutions. The reports of the co-ordinators of those contact groups, which are annexed to the report of the Working Group on its 1982 session, will constitute one of the bases of negotiations during the present year. It would seem to us useful if this method could be used again, with the necessary adjustments.

The Working Group will also have the benefit of the technical contribution made each year through the meetings of experts. At the meetings which have just taken place, the discussions were more substantial than they have been heretofore. It was thus possible, under the able guidance of the Egyptian expert, Dr. Ezz, who was asked to undertake this task by the Chairman, to draw up a list of precursors with the active participation of all the experts. The content of this list was not contested. My delegation considers it all the more regrettable, therefore, that the opposition of certain delegations prevented the submission of a report on the results achieved. We hope that the Chairman's practice of holding consultations with experts will be continued and that they will provide the technical data necessary for the current negotiations.

The submission by the United States delegation of a very full document on the content of a future convention, which it is prepared to negotiate, as announced by the Vice-President of the United States, also constitutes a very positive element.

The Soviet delegation circulated to the Committee last year, on 21 July, a document containing proposals for the basic provisions of a convention on chemical weapons.

Documents of such importance have prompted and will undoubtedly continue to prompt comments and requests for clarification from other delegations. The United States delegation has said that it is ready to answer questions put to it at a meeting arranged for that purpose. We are glad to hear this, and are sure that the Soviet Union delegation will do likewise.

The French delegation hopes that the Working Group on Chemical Weapons will be re-established without further delay. In addition to those I have just mentioned, it has at its disposal many important contributions and there will no doubt be others.

On the basis of the discussions that have taken place and the documents that have been submitted, the Committee is now in a position to perceive clearly those points on which there are divergencies of substance, and it is on these that the negotiations should be concentrated from now on.