

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

decision-making. As for voting in the Executive Council, we favour the application of the rule of unanimity when it comes to substantive matters. However, we realize that unanimity may not always emerge. Consequently, we should provide for some other rule to avoid paralysis in the Executive Council. This point should be further considered. We are currently studying with great care the various ideas and proposals on the composition of this body. However, I wish to put forward some of my delegation's reflections on this question. My delegation is of the view that all States parties to the convention are entitled to serve on the Executive Council. We also consider that the fundamental criterion should be that of equitable geographical distribution. Furthermore, we do not subscribe to any approach which calls for the creation of permanent seats on the Council.

Another issue which attracts special attention is that of "verification". We do share the view expressed by many delegations that we need a credible, verifiable convention without any loopholes. It is therefore imperative that the convention should include effective verification provisions. Yet such requirements should not be abused. It should never be distorted and stretched to threaten the national security of States parties. We are inclined to consider the non-abuse of this device as being as important as the concept of verification itself. We therefore support the inclusion of detailed provisions on the procedure for verification, in particular with respect to the provisions on challenge inspection.

We have been following very closely the work on confidentiality and on the guidelines for inspections, and in our view, a degree of progress has been achieved in this regard.

Turning to another issue, I would like to refer to the question of the Canberra Conference. The Government of Australia has been in contact with my Government, and I would like to express our satisfaction at the results of these contacts. The conference, in our view, should be intended neither to create a parallel mechanism to what we have here in Geneva, nor to address the question of the so-called non-proliferation of chemical weapons or any interim measures to that end. This is what it should not do. We expect and hope the conference will endorse the objective of a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons, and enhance the development of chemical industry and international co-operation for peaceful purposes in this field. I take this opportunity to reiterate that Egypt considers that the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons is the objective we all should strive to attain. Any attempt at reaching interim measures on non-proliferation of chemical weapons should not be accepted. The prohibition has, in our view, now become a basic norm of international law, and therefore should be scrupulously observed.

I turn now to another issue which enjoys high priority for a great number of delegations to this Conference: the mandate of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. You will recall that following the Paris Conference, and by reason of the high political will expressed in its Final Declaration, when the participating States "solemnly [affirmed] their commitments not to use chemical weapons", there was an attempt to amend the mandate so as to refer to the prohibition of use. This amendment did not acquire consensus acceptance.