

(Mr. Fan Guoxiang, China)

protracted efforts for a complete prohibition of this heinous weapon. The United Nations General Assembly has adopted on many occasions resolutions calling on the Conference on Disarmament to work out a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons at an early date. This has reflected the common desire and aspirations of the world's people. However, what arouses concern and disquiet is the fact that since the conclusion of the Geneva Protocol which prohibits the use of chemical weapons more than half a century ago, incidents involving the use of this weapon have kept on occurring from time to time; while the threat posed by the existing large stockpiles of chemical weapons remains undiminished, the rapid development of science and technology has provided new possibilities for the production and improvement of chemical weapons, and the security of all countries is subjected to even greater threat. All this has added to the urgency of concluding a convention on the complete prohibition and total destruction of chemical weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament has conducted negotiations on chemical weapons for many years. Thanks to the joint efforts of all countries, many issues concerning the future convention have been solved and some of the provisions have been drafted. Now the work of formulating the convention has entered a crucial stage. If agreement could be reached in principle among various parties on some major outstanding issues, the remaining technical details would not be difficult to work out. In their statements, many delegations have expressed the hope that major progress would be made in this year's negotiations. They are pleased at the resumption of the chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee by Ambassador Ekéus of Sweden, a distinguished and experienced diplomat working with a spirit of enterprise. We share those sentiments and we appreciate the constructive efforts he has made in promoting the negotiations, and we wish that his efforts will yield positive results. Here I would also like to extend our thanks to his predecessors, Ambassador Cromartie of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Turbanski of Poland for their valuable work. Our appreciation also goes to the competent Co-ordinators for their arduous efforts.

The fundamental objective of the future convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons is to eliminate the threat to the people of the world posed by this type of detestable weapon. Therefore, the priority issue that should be addressed by the Convention is the elimination of all the existing stockpiles of chemical weapons and their production facilities. The States possessing chemical weapons are obliged to declare and destroy their stockpiles and production facilities under international verification. In this regard I would like to welcome the compromise and flexibility displayed by some delegations on certain issues which have long been subjects of controversy. With respect to the order of destruction, the Chinese delegation has proposed that the most toxic and harmful chemical warfare agents be destroyed first so as to ensure the security of all States. It has further introduced the concept of "stockpile equivalent" and its calculating formula as a technical contribution to the early solution of the issues concerning the destruction. In view of its complex nature, this issue undoubtedly calls for further in-depth study and discussion. We hope that specific provisions on the destruction of chemical weapons and its verification acceptable to all parties can be worked out at an early date