

(Mr. Houlliez, Belgium)

... On several occasions Belgian delegations in New York or here in Geneva have expressed their apprehension at the growing number of countries acquiring ballistic missiles or the technology to produce them or to increase their range, in particular if this phenomenon goes hand in hand with nuclear or chemical capabilities. The proliferation of ballistic missiles in several areas of tension is creating a new security problem, not so much in a global context as in relations between neighbouring countries which often are or consider themselves to be developing countries. It should not be forgotten that among those countries which possess missiles, several have the means to develop chemical or even biological weapons, and some even have the technology to produce nuclear weapons. The number of States which can pose a threat to their neighbours is steadily increasing despite the economic problems which these countries are often facing and the increased risk of proliferation even towards terrorist groups. In most cases this proliferation is due to technology exports or the relative ease of increasing the range and accuracy of imported missiles.

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... At the last session of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the Belgian delegation listed the various reasons which led it to resume negotiations on a chemical weapons convention with optimism: the Paris and Canberra conferences, the restructuring of the subsidiary bodies, President Bush's proposals and so on. Since then we may add to these grounds for optimism the encouraging developments in the inter-sessional meetings, which, thanks to the efforts of the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador P. Morel, have made significant progress possible in the "rolling text". We can also add the contribution made by the documents produced by the bilateral American-Soviet negotiations, the prospects for destruction of American and Soviet stocks even before the Convention enters into force, the improvement in the mandate and the co-operation of a continually growing number of non-member countries in the work of the Ad hoc Committee, a better assurance of large-scale accession to the future convention.

Belgium, which attaches absolute priority to the negotiations on chemical weapons, is aware of the number of important problems still to be settled, such as various aspects of verification, the composition and powers of the Executive Council, the measures to be considered after violations have been detected, the order of destruction, some of the final clauses and co-operation. As we embark on consideration of these problems, and also during the finalization of other parts of the convention, we must draw a