

(Mr. Mock, Austria)

The Conference on Disarmament is resuming its work at a time when disarmament prospects are highly encouraging. The international political climate favours the conclusion of efforts designed to reduce military confrontation considerably and consolidate peace and stability. Hence it is essential, given this dynamic trend for the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the single global framework for disarmament negotiations, to make an appropriate contribution and enable decisive progress to be accomplished. Here we are thinking first and foremost of the conclusion of work on the convention on the prohibition of the use, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction. In this area, several new initiatives were put forward last year. Thus, prospects for the early conclusion of the convention have considerably improved.

In January last year, in Paris, 141 States condemned the use of chemical weapons and emphasized the need to conclude a convention on chemical weapons at an early date. In September 1989, the Government-Industry Conference against Chemical Weapons held in Canberra intensified dialogue on the world scale between government and industry representatives and clearly showed the chemical industry's full support for the future convention.

Bilaterally, the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the United States and the USSR, Messrs. Baker and Shevardnadze, in Wyoming, led to real progress. On that occasion, the Ministers reached agreement in the area of data exchange and trial inspections in advance of the conclusion of a convention. Subsequently, we learned with keen interest of the proposals that President Bush tabled in his address to the forty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We believe that his statement and the favourable reaction of the Soviet Foreign Minister constitute an encouraging sign. Lastly, we would mention the great significance of the meeting between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev in Malta.

Given this wealth of ideas and initiatives, we share the view of those who consider 1990 to be a crucial year for decisive progress in negotiations, particularly on the question of chemical weapons. The hope of arriving at a convention on the prohibition of the development, manufacture and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction, is shared well beyond the ranks of the 40 member States of the Conference on Disarmament, who have for many years been working on the drafting of this specific and complex agreement. The effectiveness of this convention depends to a major extent on the widest possible participation. Austria believes that all States that so wish should be granted the opportunity to participate in the drawing up of the convention, as has been stated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and in the Paris Declaration. This alone can offer an assurance that the text of the convention will take account of all specific concerns.

Concurrently, we believe that it is of particular value to the future convention to conduct an exchange of appropriate data in advance in order to promote mutual trust and the early signature of the convention by the greatest possible number of States. In this context, I have pleasure in announcing

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