

(Mr. Rasaputram, Sri Lanka)

"We are inclined to believe that a time-frame for the conclusion of the convention could now be considered as a via media for seeking solutions to remaining issues. The questions relating to scope, the composition and decision-making of the Executive Council, challenge inspection, assistance, the order of destruction, economic and technological development and the Convention's relationship to the 1925 Geneva Protocol are issues which require political decisions in a spirit of compromise, bearing in mind the realities of desired universality. One could argue that these issues are politically interrelated in a manner that perhaps requires solutions in a package form during the terminal phase of negotiations."

We therefore take satisfaction at the fact that a consensus was achieved to infuse a sense of timing into the mandate of the Committee. In order to use the other aspect of a package framework we encourage the Chairman of the Committee to pursue his own consultations.

All are agreed that universality is the desired objective with regard to the implementation of the Convention. As has been pointed out by the Group of 21, a key to achieve this objective would be the internal consistency of the convention in maintaining the non-discriminatory and multilateral character of the treaty which now embodies a comprehensive and unconditional ban on the entire chemical weapons cycle. Consistency of these two principles should be equally applicable to the composition and decision-making process of the Executive Council.

Long-drawn-out efforts, both bilateral and multilateral, have contributed to developing the "rolling text" as it stands today. The authority of the consensus flowing from the Paris Conference and recent developments facilitating a consensus on the main prohibition augur well for the Committee to come to grips with other political issues, while parallel technical work should continue in working groups. Sri Lanka remains committed to the conclusion of the convention at the earliest possible date. I have been instructed by my Government to state that it is actively considering becoming an original signatory to the convention, when it is ready for signature upon conclusion.

The chemical weapons convention will be a unique instrument in terms of both its intrusiveness and its coverage of civilian industrial activity. It could also be the first international instrument which envisages, in one way or another, the concept of universality even before the conclusion of negotiations. While extra-convention means will always be available to promote universality, the most effective way of ensuring the widest possible participation would be to promote universality from within the text of the convention. The majority of the potential States parties will be countries which have never had chemical weapons and have no intention of acquiring them. It is therefore important that the convention does not entail undue and disproportionate institutional and financial burdens on such countries under the verification regime envisaged. As was pointed out by the distinguished Minister of New Zealand, it will be essential that the verification burdens of the convention should not discourage smaller countries from acceding. One