

(Mr. Alessi, Italy)

new contributions in this area during this session. For the same reason, we share the interest aroused by the proposals submitted by the Soviet Union during the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The comments to which they have given rise and the replies awaited thereon could be of considerable assistance in our efforts.

On a specific point, that of the use of chemical weapons, I should like briefly to recall our position, which has already been explained in the Working Group: it is that a solution to the question of the use of chemical weapons should be sought within the framework of an adequate procedure for dealing with complaints. To this end, the future convention should include a clause expressly endowing the consultative committee with competence to investigate any complaint concerning the use of chemical weapons, and this, independently of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the validity of which should be explicitly reaffirmed. Such a clause should be based on recognition of the fact that any use of chemical weapons would necessarily imply the violation of one or more of the obligations included in the field of application of the Convention.

It is, however, essential that a rapid investigation into the use of chemical weapons should be possible. For this reason, provision should be made for the fairly automatic initiation of an investigation after the receipt of a documented complaint. The consultative committee's competence in this sphere should apply not only to cases of the use of chemical weapons by a State party to the convention, but also to cases of their use with the assistance of a State party. Last year, my delegation proposed a formula which is included among the comments on Element XIII, covering these two possibilities: we have noted that several delegations have expressed similar views this year; we therefore hope that our proposal can form the basis of a compromise to resolve this delicate issue.

I am pleased to note that the Committee seems determined henceforward to give the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space all the attention it deserves; some reservations expressed last spring appear to have been overcome. Proposals have been made for the establishment of a working group on this item of our agenda. We are in principle in favour of doing this. The real problem, however, is not whether or not to set up a subsidiary body, but how to proceed in this matter. It would be essential for the group to have an appropriate mandate, both because of the technical complexity of the subject and because we have no experience of negotiations on weapons control and disarmament in this area.

Without a mandate which provides a specific goal for our discussions, they are likely to prove aimless. My delegation has constantly drawn the Committee's attention to the urgent need to consider, as a matter of priority, questions concerning an effective and verifiable prohibition of anti-satellite systems. That in itself would be a sufficiently ambitious task. Although opinions in the Committee differ on this subject, we have noted with satisfaction some change in the way of thinking of certain delegations.

On the points to which I have referred, as well as on others which will be considered by the Committee, we should bear in mind the lessons of the second special session on disarmament. While it produced very little in the way of