

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

undertaking consultations on an extensive programme of work for the remainder of 1991 and the beginning of 1992. Whatever the outcome of his consultations, I wish to state that my delegation is prepared to work on a full-scale schedule should the Conference on Disarmament so decide.

Last year the President of the United States made an important and timely initiative on chemical weapons. My delegation is grateful that it took two stumbling-blocks out of our way. But what is more significant is that it reaffirmed the commitment on the highest level in the United States to the conclusion of a convention on the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons, and that there is no place on board for non-proliferation; a position that Egypt has always maintained.

Egypt is of the view that universal adherence to the chemical weapons convention is imperative. To attain universal adherence all the Members of the United Nations should be involved, as appropriate, in the actual preparation of the convention. An open-ended preparatory commission to precede or follow a ministerial conference, or, as the Foreign Minister of Japan suggested when he addressed us on 6 June 1991, that "we should consider convening a meeting in Geneva at the level of high officials", could positively contribute towards the universality that we aspire to attain and could serve as a useful tool in our quest to encourage universal adherence. For this reason we appreciate the constructive step that the Conference on Disarmament took when it considered sending letters to States which are neither members of nor observers at our Conference, bringing to their attention the most recent report of the Ad Hoc Committee so that they could benefit from following the work in this important phase. By doing this, I believe that we would achieve two objectives. The first is to have more participation in our work by observers in the Conference, and the second is to embark on the open-ended preparatory phase we have been considering for a long time now.

In this connection, I would like to refer to the proposal to convene a ministerial meeting as one method of finalizing our work and ensuring universality. Since the proposed ministerial meeting is directly related to the package approach, the decision to convene it is anchored on what we will be able to accomplish in elaborating the package. The more concise the package is, the more easy it becomes to invite the ministers to accelerate the conclusion of the CW convention. On the other hand, if the package is not based on a comprehensive approach the preparation of the ministerial meeting becomes insufficient, and would have negative effects because we will only be left with incoherent positions at the highest level of decision-making, which could backfire.

It is good news that the members of the Conference have agreed to add a reference to the prohibition of use to the mandate. This, however, just brings the wording of the mandate into line with the unambiguous absolute prohibition against the use of chemical weapons that already exists in article I of the draft convention. Our aim is to conclude a convention which will be universally adhered to. But universal adherence in itself is subject