

(Mr. Dhanapala, Sri Lanka)

Today my delegation addresses issues on our agenda on which we can and should find less difficulty in reaching a consensus but have not done so. It remains the view of my delegation that nuclear disarmament issues constitute the priority issues in disarmament and are fundamentally more important for the security of all. Nevertheless in terms of paragraph 75 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament we recognize the importance of chemical disarmament as an invaluable measure towards general and complete disarmament. Despite bilateral talks and recent pronouncements on the need to ban this kind of weapon completely the manifestation of these commitments has not yet been evident in sufficient degree to accelerate our work in the Conference. The prospect of a convention in 1987 has been held before us tantalisingly but the necessary readiness to agree on the issues confronting us is absent. Indeed what is most disturbing is that the chemical weapons race has been resumed. Our own resolve to work assiduously for a speedy solution of the problem in order to eliminate this abominable weapon once and for all remains strong and we are ready to assist in the final spurt towards our goal.

My delegation is happy to note the progress made this year in the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in its efforts to draft a chemical weapons convention. The progress is admittedly slow but has to be welcomed in the present context of the Conference's performance record. We are confident that the Chairman, Ambassador Cromartie, will use his skills during the planned inter-session consultations to consolidate and extend the progress that has been achieved. My delegation wishes to address some issues relevant to the Convention so as to contribute to the orientation of the work and to highlight several other important aspects.

There are other important issues, albeit not as central as the verification issue, on which the attention of the CW Committee should be focused sooner rather than later. The question of herbicides has already had a reference in the negotiations of a chemical weapons ban, however this important question has not been addressed at all during this session. Since herbicides were used as chemical agents in practice, the ban on their use is not the remote possibility that we now discuss. A single prohibition clause prohibiting the use of herbicides as a method of warfare against an adversary within the convention on chemical weapons is an important part of the convention which will certainly act as a deterrent for its use in hostilities in future warfare. The legislative measures of countries which depend on vitally on agriculture, the use crop sector and related sectors