

(Mr. von Wagner, Germany)

As we resume our negotiations on finalizing the global ban on chemical weapons, it may be useful to recall our basic negotiating objectives so as to put the remaining problems into perspective. First of all, we have the objective to rid the world of chemical weapons in order to achieve a gain in security for all of us. It has long been recognized that chemical weapons are a particularly cruel and repugnant means of warfare. One year ago, history gave us a lesson that should also have removed any lingering doubts about the role of chemical weapons in international security. If their existence continues to be legitimate, they pose a grave threat to international peace and security. The Gulf war and its antecedents have confirmed two conclusions. Firstly, despite their limited military utility, chemical weapons do have very harmful political properties. In the hands of unscrupulous aggressors, they can foster political and military adventurism. Secondly, non-proliferation efforts through export controls are insufficient to control the danger that chemical weapons constitute for the international community. The best non-proliferation measure is an effective chemical weapons ban that is based on global cooperative efforts.

Looking at these conclusions, one might wonder why it seems so difficult to bring the Geneva negotiations to a close. The security benefits which a global ban on chemical weapons would bring about seem too obvious to allow of any hesitation. Such security benefits would accrue to all countries, although national perceptions sometimes might differ. Some countries might have a particular interest in the chemical weapons convention. A Chinese scholar in the Chemical Defence Research Institute in Beijing observed last year:

"... developing countries face a more dangerous threat from chemical weapons than do developed countries. It is not surprising that all the uses of chemical weapons after World War I were against developing countries."

The quotation continues:

"... the statement 'Chemical weapons are the poor man's nuclear bomb' is wrong. The right statement is 'Chemical weapons are the sword of Damocles hanging over the poor man's head'."

The immediate security benefits which would flow from a global ban on chemical weapons already provide a compelling reason for strongly urging the Conference on Disarmament to conclude negotiations in Geneva. But there are further compelling reasons - reasons going beyond chemical weapons. Concluding the CWC successfully offers us the chance to inaugurate a qualitatively new era for multilateral arms control and disarmament. It is very difficult to maintain the momentum of a complex, long-term endeavour like multilateral arms control without any visible, tangible results. Success in this field requires treaties. The Conference on Disarmament in its present form has not produced one single international treaty text. The environmental modification Convention of 18 May 1977 was the last achievement of