

(Mr. Azikiwe, Nigeria)

the draft chemical weapons convention, whose objective is a universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive regime prohibiting the production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer and use of chemical weapons. This demonstrates the determination of all delegations to contribute effectively towards the realization of this important disarmament measure, in the conviction that these abhorrent weapons of mass destruction must be totally outlawed.

Nigeria as a member of this body has always played a constructive role towards the early achievement of this objective. We have always felt that the risk of the use of chemical weapons cannot be eliminated through partial measures such as a non-proliferation agreement, since this will encourage the retention of such weapons in the arsenals of those States which already possess them. Bilateral agreements or regional measures such as the establishment of chemical-weapons-free zones, while commendable, will not fully resolve the problem of the threat of use of chemical weapons. The key to a chemical-weapon-free world lies in a multilateral negotiated comprehensive convention, which the Ad Hoc Committee successfully concluded last week.

While recognizing that the convention is not entirely perfect, it is nonetheless a compromise text after long and intensive negotiations. Nigeria does not possess chemical weapons, nor does it intend to acquire them. In short, we do not have any hidden agenda. Notwithstanding that our chemical industry is still in its infancy, we believe that, with sufficient transparency and goodwill on all sides, the convention should help to foster international cooperation in the field of chemical activities amongst States parties. Similarly the convention must be implemented without any ambiguities in ensuring that the world chemical industry will not be subjected to an unnecessarily intrusive or bureaucratic system of inspections.

My delegation sees the draft convention as an historic achievement of the Conference on Disarmament. Hence we fully support the idea that it should be transmitted to the United Nations General Assembly for consideration. We look forward to a consensus draft resolution towards achieving universal adherence to the convention. Nigeria will be an original signatory to the convention. Naturally we expect that other States which have not done so will make a similar declaration. We also expect all those States possessing chemical weapons to do the same. By so doing, the convention will take off on firm ground towards the total elimination of chemical weapons. Humanitarian concern about the effects of this category of weapons of mass destruction is well and good; however, we should go beyond that. After all, those who have been accused of using these weapons are not solely the producers. If the use of chemical weapons is reprehensible, so should be their development, production, stockpiling and transfer.

As we conclude our work, we should start addressing our minds to the issues that will feature during the preparatory commission next year. Obviously members of the Conference should take the initiative of holding consultations on the agenda and composition of the bureau at the preparatory commission. We must ensure that decisions on the election of both the chairman and executive secretary are reached by consensus. Naturally, the