

CHINA

Some viewpoints on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

The question of the prohibition of chemical weapons has been one of universal concern to the peoples of the world for a long time. Paragraph 75 of the Final Document adopted by the General Assembly at its first special session on disarmament points out: "The complete and effective prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of all chemical weapons and their destruction represent one of the most urgent measures of disarmament. Consequently, the conclusion of a convention to this end, on which negotiations have been going on for several years, is one of the most urgent tasks of multilateral negotiations".

As is well known, during the First World War nearly 1,300,000 people were injured or killed by poisonous gases. Since then, the chemical weapons developed have been more numerous in type and characterized by their greater capacity for mass destruction.

The Geneva Protocol of 1925 already provides for the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons in war; nevertheless, in many wars, including some wars that took place recently in the Asian region, chemical weapons have been used all along.

Chemical weapons possess these characteristics: they are multiple in their effects, low in cost, easy to manufacture and convenient to proliferate. The rapid development of modern science and technology has provided various necessary conditions and new possibilities for the production of chemical weapons. The appearance of new chemical warfare agents of higher toxicity that are more rapid in their effects, and whose physical and chemical characteristics are more suitable to the requirements of utilization, and the improvement of dissemination techniques will all substantially increase the lethal and injurious capabilities of chemical weapons. In particular, after the emergence of binary chemical weapon technology the production of chemical warfare agents has already become part of general chemical and industrial production, thus enabling preparations for chemical warfare to be conducted in greater secrecy and with greater ease. The Superpowers are developing and stockpiling large quantities of chemical weapons and have made chemical weapons one of their important means of warfare. Under these circumstances, it is all the more urgent that a convention completely prohibiting chemical weapons be concluded.

The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to the question of the prohibition of chemical weapons. In various United Nations forums, the Chinese delegation has clearly stood for the complete prohibition and total destruction of all chemical weapons, and the conclusion, as soon as possible, of an international convention on the complete prohibition and total destruction of all chemical weapons. In 1980, after participating for the first time in the work of the Committee on Disarmament, the Chinese delegation put forward working paper CD/102 in which we clearly indicated our basic position on the main contents of a convention prohibiting chemical weapons. The following are some further comments on certain substantive issues relating to the prohibition of chemical weapons: