

Mr. FRIEDERSDORF (United States of America): Mr. President, in his plenary statement on 28 July, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran described recent attacks with chemical weapons against his country by the military forces of Iraq. He reminded us at that time that such attacks violate the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The Foreign Minister also expressed bitter disappointment that the international community has done little to stop such attacks.

It is extremely unfortunate that these important points were accompanied by charges that the United States "is condoning deployment of chemical weapons in the war and justifies its control only in peacetime". This, of course, is an unfounded statement.

Quite the contrary -- the United States Government has deplored and strongly condemned the illegal use of chemical weapons whenever and wherever it has occurred, specifically the repeated violations of the 1925 Geneva Protocol by Iraq. The United States has also established export controls to help curb the flow of chemicals that could be used for weapons.

The reaction of the international community to the use of chemical warfare in the Iran-Iraq war has been meagre. This has very serious implications for the effectiveness of any future convention banning chemical weapons. If vigorous action is not taken by the international community when there is clear-cut evidence that people are being killed by chemical weapons, can we expect vigorous action against less dramatic violations, for example, of a prohibition on possession of such weapons? The United States calls upon other nations, especially other members of the Conference on Disarmament, to join in condemning the use of chemical weapons to prevent erosion of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and to make clear that compliance with existing agreements is essential to progress in arms control.

The United States will continue to remind others that treaties that can be violated with impunity, offer nothing but a false sense of security. That is why delegations in the Conference on Disarmament must concentrate on negotiating a chemical weapons convention that is truly verifiable, in order that nations can be confident that violations will be detected. The international community must not look the other way when violations are discovered.

The United States has condemned the use of chemical weapons in the Gulf war, and has called on the warring parties to put an end to the bloodshed by agreeing to end the war itself. It is in this spirit that the United States supported the recent United Nations Security Council resolution, adopted by unanimous vote, I believe, which, in addition to deploring the use of chemical weapons, includes a call on Iran and Iraq to observe an immediate cease-fire as a first step towards a negotiated settlement.

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