

(Mr. Hou, China)

... Recently the evaluation of the results of the negotiations on the convention on chemical weapons has become a focus of much discussion. The Chinese delegation is of the view that, under the leadership of Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden, the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons has done a great amount of work and achieved some noticeable progress in the past year. For this we must give due credit and must not negate everything. The existence of some differences and disputes is nothing but normal. Truth fears no debate, which only marks a further deepening of the negotiations, if we face the differences squarely and try to overcome them. At the same time, we are fully aware of the new opportunities, as well as the grave challenges, the CD is faced with on its way to an early conclusion of a CW convention.

It is the view of the Chinese delegation that the practices at the CD have provided us with some useful experiences and ways to improve our work. First of all, we must bear in mind and persist with the ultimate aim of our negotiations, namely, a convention on the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of chemical weapons. It is the only commonly shared basis for the negotiations on the convention, a basis which we laid down a long time ago. It is also the linchpin on which hinges the success or failure of our negotiations. Facts have shown that when we persist with this aim and maintain this basis, we will be able to move the negotiations forward and make new progress; if this aim is forgotten or tampered with, the nature of the convention will be changed and the basis of our negotiations shaken. That is bound to lead our negotiations astray. Undoubtedly, we must try our best to prevent this from happening. There is a Chinese saying which goes, "It is better to take one concrete step than make seven dozen hollow declarations".

The Chinese delegation also considers it important to grasp all the important issues in our negotiations and make reasonable overall arrangements so that they can be discussed in parallel with each other and in a balanced manner. Over the years we have spent a lot of time and energy on consultations concerning article IX. That is entirely necessary, but at the same time we must not lose sight of the fact that this issue cannot be dealt with separately and in isolation. Verification is not the only, much less the most, important issue. The issue of the utmost importance is to guarantee that the prescribed nature and objective of the convention will not be changed, whereas verification is but a means, albeit an important one, to realize that objective. We must see not only the trees but also the forest, and must not overlook some very important issues. Facts have demonstrated that, while emphasizing the issue of verification, it is also necessary to accord due importance to such issues as the complete prohibition of the use and the thorough and unconditional destruction of chemical weapons; assistance; undiminished security, and old chemical weapons, giving them priority, or at least discussing in parallel. Otherwise we may commit the mistake of evading

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