

forward at the negotiating tables, as has recently been the case, rather than first being announced in public. I am sure that all members of the Conference on Disarmament would agree on the importance of conducting ourselves in ways which are supportive of continuing, serious pursuit of those all-important negotiations, while not abdicating our individual and collective responsibility to advance our own work with a sense of real urgency.

The arms control negotiations and discussions of the Conference on Disarmament may understandably attract fewer headlines than the bilaterals, but this should not be taken as an indication of their unimportance. It has been your task to address some of the most politically sensitive and technically difficult issues which governments confront in this area. Just as important, in its role as a sounding board as well as a negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament helps in registering emerging issues of concern among political leaders and in defining areas for new negotiated measures. Your work can thus also contribute invaluable to establishing the tone and texture of the broader arms control and disarmament process. Your current session has been characterized by a most welcome lessening of polemics; there appears to be an increasing trend toward thoughtful, substantive statements, coupled with the submission of practical working papers. I applaud this new spirit, and this new approach.

As for the Conference on Disarmament's priorities, the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction is a central task of the arms control and disarmament process. Your efforts to negotiate a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons therefore is rightly a priority item on your work agenda. Official confirmation by the United Nations Secretary General of repeated chemical weapons use in the Gulf war, which Canada resolutely condemns, as well as reports of efforts by other countries to acquire a chemical weapons capability, must add to our collective sense of urgency to achieve progress on this item. Canada does not favour diverting efforts from the negotiation of a comprehensive ban in order to address the proliferation problem separately. Nevertheless, out of concern for the problem, Canada recently increased to 14 the number of chemicals subject to export controls and, in consultation with several other countries, we are implementing a warning list procedure for a longer list of chemicals.