

Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria): It is a pleasure for me to congratulate Ambassador Morel on behalf of my Group on his election as Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. I would like to assure him of my Group's readiness to co-operate in the course of the negotiations which lie ahead during this year.

We have just adopted the mandate for the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. I would like to make the following statement for the record on behalf of the Group of Socialist States.

First, the Group of Socialist States believes that the final elaboration at the earliest date of a multilateral convention on the complete and effective prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons, and on their destruction, is a matter of highest priority for the Conference on Disarmament.

Second, the world community expects us to conclude our work urgently and responsibly. This request was explicitly made in resolutions 43/74 A and C of the General Assembly of the United Nations and in the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons. We consider these documents as manifestations of the strong political will of all participating countries to do everything possible to rid the world of chemical weapons.

Thirdly, the year 1989 will be crucial on our way to a chemical-weapon-free world. We are obliged by the world community to mark

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

that we are entering a new phase in our negotiations. From this point of view last year's mandate is outdated and does not duly reflect the present situation and the tasks before us. We have in mind, first of all, the need to delete the restrictive provision "except for its final drafting", as well as to indicate that we have a clear mandate from the Paris Conference to achieve a convention not "at the earliest possible date" or "as soon as possible", but simply "at the earliest date". It was also suggested that we should reproduce the full title of the convention, which includes the prohibition of use, as in the General Assembly resolution and as in the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference. Changing the mandate would be a clear signal that we are seriously addressing our commitments expressed in the Paris Declaration.

Fourthly, our group made specific proposals to this effect during the consultations on the mandate. We also supported the amendments to the old mandate proposed by the Group of 21 at the plenary meeting on 7 February.

Fifthly, we are disappointed that it has not been possible so far to improve the mandate of the Ad hoc Committee. We still do not understand the rationale of the Western Group, which opposed any change in the mandate. However, bearing in mind that lengthy discussions on the mandate would be detrimental to the substantive work of the Committee, we decided not to stand in the way of the decision just taken. But we do not consider this issue closed, and believe that it should be possible to continue the consultations on the mandate with the aim of coming to an agreement during the current session of the Conference.