

(Mr. Reese, Australia)

Of course, a ministerial meeting would need to be well prepared, and in this regard we welcome the informal consultations which Ambassador Hyltenius will undertake between now and the inter-sessionals.

The Conference cannot be allowed to squander the responsibility which we have to the international community to complete the convention as a matter of urgency. The negotiating session in 1991 must be the period for that completion.

Finally, on the subject of chemical weapons I would like to pay tribute to the two chairmen of the Ad hoc Committee during my time here. Both Ambassador Morel in 1989 and Ambassador Hyltenius this year, gave strong leadership to the Committee's work. Both of them showed great professional skills, creativity and tirelessness in their efforts to keep us moving forward. The role of the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee is of great importance and I am pleased that the Committee will again enjoy leadership of a high standard in the Chairman for 1991, the head of the Soviet delegation, Mr. Sergei Batsanov.

Of the other issues before the Conference I should like to comment on the constructive outcome of the review of the functioning of the Conference conducted by Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan. Bearing in mind the failure of the Group of Seven's earlier attempts to improve the functioning of the Conference, I was sceptical about the prospects for Ambassador Kamal's consultations. He deserves full credit for his skilled and productive consultations, which will lead to some practical and time-saving improvements in the operation of the Conference.

Given the extent of improvement in the international political climate, I regret that some delegations were not more responsive to proposals for a more critical look at the Conference's agenda - an agenda which was adopted in 1979 following the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The lack of substantive progress on a number of those agenda items would, at the least, suggest that, more than ten years later, there was scope to set them aside and consider issues which might lend themselves to more fruitful discussion.

To contend at this stage that consideration of the decalogue from SSOD-I simply requires more "political will" scarcely seems an adequate answer. For Governments to continue to commit resources to the Conference on Disarmament after the chemical weapons negotiations there will need to be changes made to the agenda. Others before me have suggested areas such as conventional weapons and a regional approach to disarmament as possible issues for the Conference on Disarmament to take up. As we look to improvements in the performance of the Conference on Disarmament, our approach should have in mind multilateral arms control and disarmament as a whole. We should ensure therefore that such changes are undertaken in conjunction with the equally necessary reform of the Disarmament Commission.