

(Mr. Depasse, Belgium)

Where chemical weapons are concerned, my delegation will work towards concluding as soon as possible a convention efficiently and forever banning the development, manufacture and stockpiling of such weapons. We are not unaware of the difficulties of this undertaking, since in this sphere too it is a question of coping with the risks of diverting science and technology to military purposes, a basic difficulty one finds in other spheres such as nuclear weapons or space, and which for chemical weapons arises here in particularly difficult circumstances.

Firstly, the chemicals industry has been developing both qualitatively, quantitatively and geographically since last century. It has grown considerably in many countries. This does not necessarily apply to space or nuclear activities.

Secondly, the military applications of chemistry have long been known and the acquisition of the technology enabling such weapons to be manufactured has, alas, proved relatively simple. Large stocks of chemical weapons have been built up. Recent violations of the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons contained in the Geneva Protocol of 1925 have shown the risks inherent in this situation.

Thirdly, the verification of the non-production of weapons is further hindered by the fact that production and stockpiling can take place relatively discreetly.

As a non-chemical-weapons industrial country which has had the sad privilege of numbering among its soldiers the first victims of chemical weapons, my country attaches primordial importance to the success of our work. It considers that the verification and monitoring of a ban on chemical weapons production is by no means incompatible with the conservation of the conditions for the optimum development of the industry. There are ways and means to be found, some difficulties to be solved, but the obstacles are not insurmountable. It is essential to establish an efficient verification system. We think that it is indispensable that when the convention is signed it should be clearly known that every measure has been taken to ensure that no suspicion of non-observance of the convention can last, and that doubts as to the behaviour of a party can be rapidly dissipated.

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