

(Mr. Wegener, Federal Republic of Germany)

Why have these propitious circumstances faded away before our eyes? Why has progress eluded us? Do we have to choose a different negotiating method?

Looking back upon the annual session, of which so little remains for our work, one is impressed by the fact that one group of States has insistently chosen silence in the face of the essential issues of a future chemical weapons ban. We must seriously ask whether this silence betrays a new policy of delaying the conclusion of a chemical weapons ban, or what else might be the cause for such failure to contribute to our common efforts at bridging diverging positions. There is really no use indulging in ritual affirmations, together with other groups of States, that the negotiations on a chemical weapons ban are promising, if, concurrently, the necessary efforts are missing to move negotiations ahead. It is equally futile to call, in a ritual manner, for the political will in favour of genuine negotiations and for formal drafting exercises if one is not oneself equipped with the necessary political flexibility, enabling one in the interest of necessary compromise to relinquish untenable positions and to move in the direction of new, shared positions. Indeed, it is futile to limit one's own contribution to ongoing negotiations to a sterile rehashing of known views.

My delegation feels strongly that the time has come for an appeal to all participants to show a greater measure of political flexibility and to document such flexibility by practical contributions. That is the prerequisite for progress.

In a recent statement, Ambassador Imai of Japan underlined the priority of the destruction of existing stocks. Indeed, the current decisive danger emanates from existing chemical weapons stocks and from those chemical weapons production facilities which make for the proliferation of stocks, or at least could do so. In consequence, their destruction, reliably verified, constitutes, in our view, the central task for the entire chemical weapons negotiating complex. There is at least a certain measure of agreement among ourselves on this requirement, and there are also in this central area a number of elements which work towards consensus in substance. We should seriously ask ourselves whether it would not be worthwhile to achieve, in the first instance, a solution to these two interrelated problems — the destruction of stocks, and of production facilities. I would indeed suggest that the chemical weapons Working Group should, on a priority basis, concentrate on these elements of consensus, and my delegation would be ready to undertake a compilation containing such elements for the benefit of the Working Group. These elements of consensus could then be "recorded" in the proposed manner. If we do succeed in this central area in achieving partial progress, and registering it in written form, we shall have accomplished a great step, facilitating and accelerating the work of next year's session.

In this connection, I am pleased to comment on the impressive working paper by the delegation of the United States of America in which procedures for the verification of the destruction of stocks are graphically described, based on the example of an existing destruction facility. The particular value of this