

(U Maung Maung Gyi, Burma)

As my statement is of a general character it would hardly appear necessary to express our opinion on the subject of chemical-weapons prohibition, which has already reached an advanced stage of negotiations. However, it would be an omission on our part not to mention a subject which is important not only because it concerns the elimination of a particular type of weapons of mass destruction from the arsenal of States, but also because the prospects for an agreement are beginning to emerge. Although discussions have been proceeding since 1970, detailed work during the last two years have highlighted the areas of convergence as well as those of divergence, and the principal elements necessary for a chemical weapons convention have also been delineated. The principle of the need for an effective verification system to assure compliance is not an issue. The issue is to determine the modalities for an effective verification system on the basis of mutual accommodation which would provide equal security for all States.

There is now a need to generate further momentum in the negotiating process with a view to arriving at a timely agreement on a chemical weapons convention. The process of disarmament is slow and arduous and experience has shown that it takes years to arrive at a mature stage of negotiations; this has been particularly true of chemical weapons.

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(Mr. Vidas, Yugoslavia)

The highest hopes exist in this Conference and outside it in the world regarding the completion in the course of this year of a convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction. There is a sound basis for this, since, after many years of elaboration, definite progress has been made in the process of negotiations to this effect. A detailed consideration of technical issues has already taken place in the Committee on Disarmament, and the bodies that preceded it and bilaterally between the Soviet Union and the United States. Important contributions have been made in respect of the destruction of the existing chemical-weapon stockpiles by several countries such as the Netherlands, Indonesia, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States through the information supplied or in workshops specifically organized for the purpose of demonstrating the verification process during the destruction of chemical-weapon stockpiles. An enormous amount of effort and goodwill has been invested by a great number of experts and by various delegations to the Conference. We also welcome the announcement made by the United States that it will submit to the Conference its own draft of a chemical weapons convention very soon. We are sure that this new contribution will receive very careful consideration alongside with other proposals