

(Ms. Hernes, Norway)

... An agreement on conventional forces in Europe is in itself a major objective. It would, however, be further and significantly enhanced by the conclusion of a global ban on chemical weapons. This session of the Conference on Disarmament is indeed focused on the necessity of concluding the chemical weapons convention at the earliest date. We must take advantage of the momentum generated by the successful Paris Conference on chemical weapons. Not least due to the thorough preparations by the French Government, the Conference achieved its two main objectives, which were to reaffirm the validity of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, and to give further impetus to the negotiations on the chemical weapons convention. The Final Declaration adopted in Paris represents a solid basis for further efforts and a commitment to intensify the negotiations on a global, comprehensive and effectively verifiable ban in the Conference on Disarmament.

The chemical weapons convention would enhance international security by banning a whole class of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, such a convention, which is now within reach, should be concluded at the earliest date. This requires that all participating States make every effort to come to grips with the issues that are still unresolved. Nineteen hundred eighty nine will be a year of crucial importance as regards efforts to solve the outstanding political and technical issues. I therefore welcome the dynamic leadership of the present Chairman of the Committee on Chemical Weapons, Ambassador Morel of France.

Sensitive and complex issues still remain to be resolved, in particular questions concerning verification of non-production. The chemical weapons convention would entail monitoring relevant chemical facilities on a permanent basis. In this regard the national trial inspections will facilitate finalization of the relevant inspection procedures. These procedures should, of course, ensure that a State party is not prevented from pursuing legitimate activities or from developing its chemical industry for peaceful purposes.

Another major unresolved issue is the challenge inspection system. In our opinion the convention must contain a provision giving States parties the right to submit a request for on-site inspection within 48 hours, which cannot be rejected. The mandatory nature of the challenge inspections represents, in fact, one of the corner-stones of the new convention.

(continued)