

centres and laboratories. A second report was filed by the United States in April 1988.

A ban on chemical weapons has been on the UN agenda since 1968. Yet progress has materialized only recently. In 1980, the forty-nation Conference on Disarmament (CD) established an Ad Hoc Working Group on Chemical Weapons. By 1983, this Group had developed a consensus document identifying elements of a comprehensive treaty, and had outlined areas of agreement and disagreement.

An important step in the CD negotiations on chemical weapons was taken by the United States in 1984 when it tabled a draft treaty providing for verification by challenge inspections (i.e. short-notice, mandatory inspections of plants suspected of cheating). That year also saw general agreement that the destruction of existing chemical weapon stockpiles should be subject to systematic international inspection--although disagreement persisted over the particular inspection procedures to be used.

Concern over chemical weapons has been fed by recent allegations of their use. Since 1980, the UN Secretary General has conducted several inquiries to ascertain the truth of such charges. A series of UN reports, beginning in 1984, has confirmed that chemical weapons have been used in the Gulf War by Iraq against Iran. On 1 March 1988 Iraq was again reported to have used chemical weapons--this time against its Kurdish population. A UN investigation of the alleged attacks was undertaken 17 March-4 April 1988. On 26 April, a report on the use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war was presented by the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council. Although the report indicated the use of both mustard and nerve gas in the conflict, it did not identify the countries responsible for such action.