

(Mr. Gros-Espiell, Uruguay)

In the statement I delivered to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4 October 1990 entitled "The vulnerability of peace without disarmament", I said one or two words that with your permission I would like to repeat again:

"The international community must avoid the occurrence of similar dangerous situations in the future. That will be possible only if we accelerate the disarmament process. Uruguay understands that the immediate task is to concentrate on further advancing the regulation and limitation of armaments, whether conventional, nuclear, chemical, bacteriological, radiological or space weapons."

... First of all, therefore, allow me to say a few words on the question of chemical weapons, as it stands today in the view of my Government. We know that from the legal standpoint the present situation on the chemical weapons issue is determined by the existence and applicability of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, a protocol that was supplemented many years later, because this Protocol had emerged from the work of the League of Nations, by the 1972 Convention, drafted within the United Nations and devoted to the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and their destruction. But it is clear that these two international instruments, which are manifestly important and necessarily applicable, do not by any means exhaust the international agenda on the subject of chemical weapons. For that reason the Paris Conference of 1989 on the prohibition of chemical weapons analysed the problem in the light of the present situation, and concluded that it was necessary to expedite this process in order to complete the legal framework of the total ban on all the aspects of the chemical weapons issue.

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In this context, the work of the Conference on Disarmament is obviously of great importance, and today is of a topicality and urgency that cannot be ignored by anyone. The Paris Conference, in the year 1989, on the one hand, recognized the importance and continuing validity of the 1925 Protocol, and at it the States parties to that Protocol solemnly reaffirmed the prohibition as established in it and called upon States that have not yet acceded to it to do so, but underscored, and this is what is important, what I wish to emphasize today, the necessity of concluding, at an early date a convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons, and on their destruction. This is the major challenge we face as far as chemical weapons are concerned at the present time, one that in the light of the current situation it is necessary to expedite with renewed efforts and with sure hopes of arriving as soon as possible at an acceptable solution for the entire international community which will be implemented immediately without fail. In this regard, I wish to refer to the statement by the Group of 21 which was made very recently on 7 February 1991 in the form of an exposé by Peru on behalf of the Group. On this basis, on this awareness of the urgency, the importance, the topicality and this Conference's inescapable commitment to the international community with regard to the chemical weapons issue, my Government hopes that in a short time it will be possible to present this convention that is being so eagerly awaited.