

### 3. Chemical Weapons

Although the conference was considered a success, some countries charged Western nations with maintaining a double standard by trying to halt the proliferation of chemical weapons in the Third World, while at the same time maintaining and continuing to develop chemical weapons themselves. Some Arab states maintained that as long as Israel possessed a presumed nuclear capability, they had the right to possess chemical weapons.

In June 1990, the bilateral discussions between the US and the Soviet Union on chemical weapons resulted in an agreement to begin exchanging and verifying data on their respective chemical weapons capabilities prior to the completion of the chemical weapons convention. As well, on 1 June 1990, the two completed a formal agreement which requires them to cease production of chemical weapons and destroy their chemical weapons stocks over a ten-year period, reducing them to 5,000 agent tonnes each by the end of 2002. Destruction must begin by the end of 1992. The two pledge to have reached a level of 500 tonnes each (destroying 98 percent of their stocks) within eight years after a convention enters into force.

Perhaps most important has been the effect of the Persian Gulf war. The war against Iraq by the UN multinational coalition raised, for the first time in many years, the spectre of wide-scale use of chemical and biological weapons in warfare. As UN sanctions and then war began, it was known that Iraq had a chemical weapons capability and possibly biological weapons. It was also known that Iraq had used chemical weapons in its war against Iran as well as against its own population. These factors made clear both the need to complete and implement a global chemical weapons ban and the fragile nature of the process.

On 13 May 1991, President Bush announced a major shift in the US position. According to Bush, the US was now ready to forswear the use of chemical weapons for any reason, including in retaliation to the use of chemical weapons, once the convention enters into force. Bush also proposed that a provision stating that chemical weapons should not be used for any purpose be included in the convention. Furthermore, the US would completely eliminate its chemical weapons within ten years after the convention enters into force. US insistence on the right to maintain some chemical weapons over the long term as a hedge against non-signatories had been an important obstacle at the negotiations to that point.

In response to the sense of urgency created after the Persian Gulf war, and to the call from US President Bush to complete a chemical weapons convention by the end of 1992, negotiators at the Conference on Disarmament have been working to achieve a complete, agreed draft text. One of the most serious ongoing stumbling blocks has been the question of challenge inspection. The draft treaty presented to the CD by the