

(The President)

I shall now proceed to document CD/WP.417, by which the Conference will re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons and appoint as its Chairman Ambassador Adolf Ritter von Wagner of Germany. I see no objection to the draft decision, and we shall therefore adopt it.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I am pleased to note that, by this quick decision at the opening of our work for 1992, the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons is now in a position to resume work immediately, in order to intensify its negotiations this year on a final agreement on a convention banning chemical weapons. Allow me also, on behalf of the Conference, to extend our congratulations to Ambassador von Wagner on his appointment to the heavy responsibility of conducting the work of the Ad Hoc Committee at this crucial stage of its work. His knowledge of the subject-matter and his diplomatic competence will, I am sure, provide the necessary impetus for these negotiations. I give the floor to Ambassador von Wagner.

Mr. von WAGNER (Germany): Mr. President, let me express my delegation's deep satisfaction at having the privilege to negotiate world-wide arms control and disarmament questions under your able guidance. We wish you luck and success.

The Conference on Disarmament has just decided on the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. I feel very honoured that the Conference entrusted me with the task of chairing the Ad Hoc Committee. I should like to express my sincere thanks to all my colleagues for their confidence in my efforts. I feel very honoured and grateful - but above all, I feel obliged by the responsibility which accompanies the Ad Hoc Committee chairmanship in this critical year. You have my firm commitment that I will do everything to bring our common endeavour to a successful conclusion.

In this context, and here I should like to add to my prepared manuscript, I want to stress that I am perfectly aware that I need your trustworthy cooperation. I shall undertake concrete efforts to maintain close contact with all groups and delegations, and I shall consult with them as closely as possible in order to achieve smooth proceedings in the more formal meetings and sessions. At the same time, I should like to invite and encourage all delegates also to seek close contact with me; the cooperation I envisage cannot be a one-way street. Efforts, however, from all sides will achieve success.

The convention is clearly within reach this year, thanks to the contributions by all delegations and by the previous chairmen of the Ad Hoc Committee. I should like to pay tribute in particular to my predecessor, Ambassador Batsanov, who led the work of the Committee in a very skilful and pragmatic way. Due to the untiring efforts under particularly difficult circumstances by Ambassador Batsanov, his working group chairmen and Friends of the Chair, we now have the basis on which we can venture the last breakthrough to the signing of the convention.