

(Mrs. Theorin, Sweden)

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The foremost challenge today to the Conference on Disarmament is to accomplish the early and successful conclusion of a comprehensive chemical weapons convention. The Geneva Protocol of 1925 has not sufficed to halt a chemical weapons arms race. We have had reports on the use of chemical weapons in various parts of the world, most recently in the Gulf, where its use by Iraq has been effectively substantiated by United Nations experts. Such reports add to a growing concern that chemical weapons are for the present and the future and not only the past. Chemical warfare is a growing danger.

There seems to be universal recognition that the only effective response possible is the creation of an international disarmament régime for chemical weapons. Negotiations in this Conference have made steady progress. The most recent updating of the "rolling text" of late April this year is thus in many respects hardly recognizable compared with the modest first draft of 1984.

The flexible and positive approach of delegations to the negotiations is particularly gratifying for my delegation, as it facilitates the difficult task of the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee. This approach has brought a number of key problems closer to their solution. Progress has been made in the direction that all chemical weapon stocks should immediately be declared and, within a 10 year period, eliminated by destruction only. The initial declaration of stocks shall be verified and the stockpiles thereafter systematically monitored. What remains to be done is to agree on an order of destruction up to the end of the tenth year after the Convention has entered into force. Consensus on a broad outline of the order of destruction is growing. It is vital for trust in the convention that all States parties to it be obliged from the outset to declare all weapon stocks.

A régime for the elimination of chemical weapon production facilities is also taking shape. Understanding has been reached on the verification of declarations of such facilities and their closure, as well as international systematic monitoring and verification of the elimination of facilities.

To prohibit future production of chemical weapons in a verifiable manner is a major concern. Over the years more negotiating efforts and intellectual energy have been devoted to this part of the convention than to any other problem. It is unavoidable that the chemical industry will be affected by a system of non-production. As the outline of a generally acceptable verification régime is now emerging from the negotiations, it can, however, be stated that the industry, already subject to intrusive environmental and health regulations would assume a modest additional burden when the convention enters into force.

Some differences on details in the régime remain. But they should not be impossible to overcome. Trust in the convention will depend on the means provided to investigate also non-declared activities which could constitute