

(Mr. Alessi, Italy)

In some sectors, the Conference on Disarmament has passed beyond the phase of preliminary talks and reached the critical threshold beyond which discussions may lead to compromises and agreements; this is the case for chemical weapons as well as for radiological weapons.

My delegation continues to give particular priority to a world-wide ban on all chemical weapons.

The conditions are ripe to make 1984 a decisive year in this sphere; the political desire to succeed in the negotiations is clearly reflected in the report of the working group submitted to us by Ambassador McPhail; document CD/416 and the reports of the contact groups provide the common ground for negotiating a Convention.

The difficulties cannot be underestimated; a number of problems have existed for so long that they seem to have become unalterable. Experience has nevertheless shown that a very close consideration of comparable positions sometimes reveals a greater convergence than was previously thought; that was recently the case, for example, of verification systems for production in small-scale facilities.

For this reason one cannot over-emphasize the need for everyone to take an active share in negotiations and for each position to be explained in detail. It is inconsistent to call for the drafting of texts without helping to create the objective conditions for such work.

In the light of these requirements, we can measure the full importance of the announcement made by the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Schultz, of the forthcoming submission of a complete text of a treaty banning chemical weapons. We welcome this initiative which cannot fail to give a decisive impetus to our work. It is part of the series of very useful contributions which have marked the participation of the United States delegation in these negotiations. In this regard, I would recall in particular the success obtained by the working meeting organized last November at the United States facility for the destruction of chemical weapons at Tooele; this meeting, of undeniable interest, permitted direct observation of the procedures used in the United States and provided a unique opportunity to discuss the various means of verification of the destruction of stockpiles.

Where the substance of the negotiations is concerned, the priority questions continue to relate to stockpiling and the means of manufacturing chemical weapons. It is necessary to focus on these two aspects of the Convention, identify possible compromises and set them down in written form. I think it essential to maintain the integrated approach, adopted last year by the contact groups, in which all aspects of the same subject (for instance, declaration, destruction, verification etc. of stockpiles) should be negotiated together.