

(Mrs. Theorin, Sweden)

... It is my Government's view that a comprehensive and effective ban on chemical weapons within the near future is absolutely necessary. The risk of the further spread and use of chemical weapons is otherwise going to remain with us for ever. People all over the world are concerned about chemical weapons, and recognize the imperative need to ban them completely. Now it is up to politicians and diplomats to face this challenge.

At the close of the spring session, my delegation gave its detailed views in the plenary on the current stage of the chemical weapons negotiations. I will therefore limit myself to a few basic considerations. The Conference on Disarmament has made considerable progress towards a chemical weapons ban in

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recent years. After the Paris Conference, which underscored the urgency of our task, the machinery set up here in Geneva - under the creative guidance of Ambassador Morel - has taken up important aspects of the challenge before us. But, unfortunately, not enough political commitment has yet been devoted to some of the most problematic issues and key areas. We are, for example, not yet close to solving the difficult questions connected with challenge inspections. We have not made enough progress on the question of the Executive Council; nor on the order of destruction; nor on the effective total prohibition of the use of chemical weapons.

Instead of focusing on these and other crucial problems, much energy has been spent on less urgent issues and also on new and probably less fruitful concepts. This is, of course, not due to anybody's bad intentions. It is simply because a strong enough political commitment has not yet been mobilized. The technicalities will be far from impossible to overcome, once the political commitment is manifested. It is unfortunate that recent positive developments in other areas of disarmament do not yet seem to have reached the area of chemical weapons. If that issue were to be energetically addressed by the two super-Powers, giant steps could be taken within a few months.

The only new initiative in this area is the Canberra Conference. It can make a useful contribution if it increases knowledge within the chemical industry about the implications of the coming convention, and encourages the industry to co-operate in order to implement its provisions. What that Conference must not do is limit our focus to the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. That would distract from rather than support the work here in Geneva. The only solution to the threat posed by chemical weapons is a comprehensive convention, and we must make a concerted effort to ensure its speedy conclusion.