

(Mr. Onkelinx, Belgium)

We hope that in 1983 the Committee will not waste the opportunity that has been offered to it of starting such genuine negotiations and that, on the basis of a programme of work that is as precise as possible, it will thoroughly examine the various questions falling within the mandate that has been given to the Working Group on a Nuclear Test Ban.

Our agenda covers a large number of subjects, and it is difficult to organize an in-depth discussion of each of them. We should like to suggest, however, that once a main topic has been selected for discussion at the Committee's plenary meetings during a particular week, delegations should try to keep to that topic in their statements and not refer to various others. This would make for greater unity in our debates and our efforts.

It seems to us, moreover, that in 1983, if we want finally to achieve some success in our negotiations, we ought to set aside more time for those questions in respect of which the conditions for genuine negotiations appear to us to have been met. In saying this I am thinking in particular of the prohibition of chemical weapons and that of radiological weapons. This pragmatic approach should be understood as being without prejudice to the fundamental priorities as seen by each of us in the disarmament process. It would be rather a matter of functional priorities dictated by the course of the discussions and encouraged by the chances of success in certain sectors of our work. It seems to us preferable to accept such a functional selectivity rather than maintain a programme of theoretical priorities which, in the end, would merely perpetuate the present state of stagnation of our work.

So far as the prohibition of chemical weapons is concerned, we shall have at our disposal in 1983 an excellent basis for the continuation of the negotiations. I am referring to the reports of the various contact groups which the Chairman of the Working Group had the excellent idea of setting up.

While it is true that agreement on one basic element in the draft convention will always depend on agreement on the other components, our delegations ought nevertheless at the present stage to be very open-minded as regards the procedures to be employed at our next session. It seems to us that the time has come to embark on the stage of drafting a convention. The contact group approach has had the advantage of permitting parallel discussion of all the various elements of the convention. In our work in 1983 we should make use of the lessons learned from this method.

When the Committee meets again for its next session, in 1983, it will have had a long period of reflection, of some eight months, on the subject of the prohibition of radiological weapons. The consultations held by the Chairman of the Working Group and his use of a written questionnaire have, we believe, helped to clarify to some extent the various points of view. Our feeling is that we have come closer to the moment when genuine negotiations, covering both the so-called traditional subject matter and the problem of the prohibition of attacks against nuclear facilities, should become possible.

Various formulas have been put forward, in particular by Japan, for establishing a link between these two subjects of negotiation. Belgium, too, has in the past offered suggestions for the establishment of such a link. Those proposals were based on article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and article IX of the Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological Weapons. They are still valid and could be developed in the light of the new suggestions put forward during the present session.