

Mr. MOLANDER (Sweden): As item co-ordinator for chemical weapons of the Group of 21, I have been empowered to make the following statement.

The Group of 21 expresses its satisfaction that the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons has been re-established. The Group would also like to take this opportunity to extend its sincere congratulations to Ambassador Morel of France as the new Chairman of the Committee. Ambassador Morel embodies the very spirit of the Paris Conference, to which he made such decisive contributions with his dynamism, enthusiasm and intellectual discipline. The Group of 21 pledges to work with him in that very spirit.

At the opening meeting of the Conference, on 7 February, as you have just recalled, Mr. President, the Group of 21 proposed that the mandate for the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons should be improved, firstly by including a reference to the prohibition of use of chemical weapons, and secondly, by deleting the phrase "except for its final drafting". The Group of Socialist States and China supported these proposals.

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(Mr. Molander, Sweden)

The proposals were not intended to be controversial. In fact, the Group could not foresee that the proposed amendments could cause difficulties to any group or any country which participated in the General Assembly and the Paris Conference, where such language was agreed to by consensus. It is therefore with a considerable degree of disappointment that the Group of 21 has taken note of the fact that the Conference as a whole is not in a position to join consensus on the two proposals.

The Group of 21, however, considers that it is of paramount interest that work in the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons should be pursued immediately. It has therefore agreed not to press further its proposals for an improved mandate, thus enabling the Committee to start its substantive work as of this week. The position of the Group is clear, however, and it hopes that the Conference will wish to review the mandate at an appropriate time during the 1989 session.

Whatever the mandate, the Group of 21 is ready, in the words of the Paris Declaration, "to redouble its efforts, as a matter of urgency, to resolve expeditiously the remaining issues and to conclude the convention at the earliest date". It is our hope that the future work of the Committee from its very beginning will show that our resolve is shared by all.

This concludes the statement of the Group of 21.