

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

... Turning now to item 4, allow me to seize this opportunity to thank the French Government for convening the very important Paris Conference on chemical weapons. I wish in this respect to pay tribute to the efforts made by Ambassador Pierre Morel and the French delegation to the Conference of Disarmament for their meticulous preparations to ensure that the Paris Conference succeeded. The Paris Declaration recognized that the problem of the elimination of chemical weapons should not be treated in isolation from all other weapons of mass destruction. In our view the crux of the issue is that States are entitled to be reassured that they will not be threatened by the possible use of weapons of mass destruction. Granting certain States the right to possess such weapons is always discriminatory. Moreover, in the absence of effective international controls comprising credible assurances as well as viable monitoring arrangements, the threat to national security persists.

Egypt is a party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the prohibition of the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons, and fully supports the current efforts to conclude a convention banning chemical weapons. Egypt was also in the vanguard of States that signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction in 1972. Unfortunately, as has been stated more than once before the CD, certain considerations prevailing in our region prevented us from speeding up its ratification. We do hope that such considerations will not arise with respect to future disarmament agreements.

I seize this opportunity to reiterate that Egypt considers that the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons is the objective we should all strive to attain. Any attempt at reaching interim measures on non-proliferation of chemical weapons should not be accepted. The prohibition has, in our view, now become a basic norm of international law, and therefore should be scrupulously observed. Though Egypt recognizes that a considerable degree of progress has been achieved, we do however realize that we still have a long way ahead. Many of the remaining differences, as my delegation has stated on more than one occasion, are not confined to mere drafting refinements. Many issues are still not resolved. I shall address myself to some of these issues.

The first issue, in the view of my delegation, pertains to the relation between the chemical weapons convention and other international agreements. Our understanding, in accordance with the general rules of international law, is that the chemical weapons convention, from the moment of its entry into force, should prevail over any existing international agreement covering the same subject-matter as that of the chemical weapons convention. Ambassador Rolf Ekéus of Sweden summed up this problem pertinently in a statement before this Conference on 13 September 1988 when he rightly said "our whole work would be undone if unilaterally declared 'rights' under the Geneva Protocol of 1925 were to be transferred and thereby somehow eternalized