(Mr. Vejvoda, Czechoslovakia)

But there are unfortunately, not only positive developments concerning chemical weapons. While the Conference is doing its best to outlaw them, the NATO alliance is preoccupied with search for the rationale for the production of binary weapons and their eventual introduction in Europe. We deplore the Brussels decision of 22 May and we fail to understand how it fits in with widely proclaimed readiness to achieve a CW ban. This inconsistency makes us wonder what is wrong with the present process aimed at chemical disarmament if, in spite of its relatively advanced stage, it has not eliminated the drive towards a further chemical-arms build-up. Does this inconsistency result simply from the approach of individual military planners, or is it an indication of a wider, general policy line?

We can hardly find an exhaustive answer to that question. But some conclusions might offer themselves if one looks back at the development of CW and at the inner logic of the chemical-arms race. Within the span of about half a century several generations of CW were developed and it was mainly their toxicity which constantly increased. As a result, in terms of toxicity and area coverage, modern CW agents surpass the agents used in World War I by several orders of magnitude. A simple comparison of lethal effects of various CW agents illustrates this progression very clearly. If, in the case of phosgene, used in 1915, this represented 3,200 mg per cubic metre of air within a minute, for yperite (1917) it was only about half of that amount. For sarin, produced in 1939, the lethal effect threshold went down sharply to 100 mg/m^3 of air, for nerve agent VX (1960/1) to 38 mg/m^3 of air and the chemical designed as EA 5774 (1979) to just about 10 mg/m^3 of air. Thus, today's CW agents are substantially, "qualitatively", different from the old ones. It might be further demonstrated by the simple fact that for percutaneous administration - which represents an important method of military use - about 200 drops of yperite are needed to constitute a lethal dose, while the same effect can be achieved by a simple drop of VX compound.

But even this extreme toxicity does not, unfortunately, represent a limit which could not be further lowered. Toxic compounds, which the United States is considering for military use and which are currently still in the development stage, are estimated to produce lethal effects even at a concentration of 0.1 to 0.001 mg per cubic metre of air. It might be safely presumed that these "prospects" are tempting to military planners and represent an important reason why they are not ready to abandon the chemical-arms race in their quest for superiority.

With the overall development of weapons and military equipment, the means for delivering chemical weapons are also becoming faster, more accurate and more penetrating. Today a whole spectrum of such means exists, from already obsolete chemical mines and hand grenades for use in combat to more sophisticated artillery and multiple-rocket-launcher shells, air force bombs and containers, chemical warheads for short-range and medium-range ground-based missiles. Here again, a new generation of delivery means appears on the horizon. For instance, it has been reported that specific systems for delivering organophosphorous compounds by means of cruise missiles are being developed and have already been tested. They will make it possible to carry out surprise attacks on pinpoint targets well behind the battle lines, using highly toxic and fast-acting chemical warfare agents.