

(Mr. Beesley, Canada)

For these reasons, the Government of Canada takes some considerable satisfaction from the serious, constructive and business-like approach to the negotiation which characterized our work during the 1986 session and which has persisted in the present one. Progress, indeed, continues to be made. The presence here this week of a number of industrial experts from several countries, including Canada, indicates the practical emphasis of our current endeavours. I would like to express special appreciation to Ambassador Ekéus for the energetic but sensitive way in which he is presiding over our work. All delegations of the Conference are now working with a seriousness of purpose which augurs well for prospects for continuing and significant negotiating progress.

Such progress is all the more urgent when seen against the distressing fact that chemical weapons continue to be used. Moreover, there is strong evidence that an increasing number of countries have acquired or may be seeking to acquire a chemical warfare capability. The Canadian Government was dismayed at the most recent report of the United Nations Secretary-General which again confirmed the repeated use of chemical weapons in the Iraq-Iran War. Canada abhors and condemns this use of chemical weapons in clear breach of the legal obligations embodied in the Geneva Protocol of 1925, to which both Iraq and Iran are parties. We again laud the Secretary-General for his initiative in launching an investigation and bringing its results to the attention of the Security Council. It is a matter of regret that, thus far, no effective means has yet been found, not only to prevent the repeated use of chemical weapons, but to bring an end to that tragic conflict. We again call on all parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol to adhere to their obligations, and we urge the combatants in the Gulf war to seek, through negotiations, a termination of hostilities in accordance with Security Council resolutions 582 and 588.

The implications of this repeated use of chemical weapons, and of the reported interest of a number of countries in acquiring a chemical warfare capability, are alarming in several respects. They reinforce mutual suspicion and insecurity. They undermine the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. They also constitute an all too tangible reminder that the chemical weapon threat is not confined to one particular region or to one arena of potential conflict. They underscore that chemical weapons are a global problem which must be addressed on a global basis. This should reinforce our sense of urgency and our determination to persevere in the negotiation of an agreement to ban these weapons from the military arsenals of all countries.

It was against this background that the Canadian Government decided that, pending the conclusion of a chemical weapons convention, certain practical steps should be taken with a view to limiting the danger of the misuse of chemicals for weapons purposes. Beginning in 1984, and in co-ordination with a number of other countries, Canada has placed export controls on several chemical compounds considered particularly useful for the manufacture of highly toxic chemical weapons. Canada has recently increased the number of chemical compounds whose export is controlled. The Canadian Government has been pleased to note that a number of other countries have acted similarly and have placed controls on the export of certain chemicals. We consider it would be useful if still more countries were also to do so.