

(Mr. Nasser, Islamic Republic of Iran)

sensitivity of the issue obliges me to be frank and straightforward. This important session of the Conference has commenced its work amidst great enthusiasm as we all anticipate great progress in various areas of disarmament, including above all in the negotiations on the chemical weapons convention. Many have contributed in the past to the gradual but solid development and evolution of this very comprehensive convention. The tireless efforts of Ambassador Morel were particularly timely as they fully prepared the ground for this year's important deliberations under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Hyltenius and his knowledgeable colleagues.

There is, indeed, good reason for enthusiasm as developments are all encouraging. Collectively they have given rise to the valid perception that the convention is no longer a distant hope but something that is very much for real and very close at hand. It is also understandable that more countries should now wish to participate in the work of the Conference, which would indeed welcome this as another sign that the Conference is moving in the right direction and is able to produce results and achievements. Indeed, the Conference has benefited from the valuable contributions of a number of non-members who have participated in the past as active observers and who are invited with pleasure and gratitude to continue their participation.

However, considering the very delicate nature of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, particularly on the CW convention, we feel that we should not have become overly anxious. We still believe that we probably have. While we understand the political reasoning behind the new proposal on participation, we are very much concerned about its possible negative implications. This clustered "all or none" proposal may have seemed an easy way out of a possible political confrontation, something that we did not wish to see repeated in this forum again, but whether it can help the work of the Conference and the chemical weapons convention in the future remains doubtful. We believe it was perhaps inappropriate and much less fair to, in a way, put participants with distinguished records of positive contributions on the same footing as countries with the most verified record of use of chemical weapons, but, aside from the question of fairness, we have to be cognizant of the implications for our work. A case-by-case approach was a well-established procedure which gave the members a chance to review and decide on every application based on its merits. Active and positive participation was thus recognized, valued and welcomed. This, in turn, encouraged other countries to participate with the same positive notions and commitment. The new proposal may very well put an end to that useful trend and may even reverse it. We hope this will not be the case, as there have already been a number of statements which stressed the need for participation by non-members with a positive attitude in mind.

I am not suggesting that a full commitment to the CW convention before its finalization should be a pre-condition or prerequisite for participation. There may be States which are still examining the issue. This is their prerogative. But how about those who are fully committed in their official positions and in their practice not to the objective of the convention but quite the contrary? Our reservations on the application by Israel stem from a position of principle shared by many States in and outside our region.