

(Mr. Vajvoda, Czechoslovakia)

Renewed attention appears to be attached by several delegations to the scope of the convention and to the definition of chemical weapons, where the introduction of the concept of chemical warfare agents has been advocated.

In military terminology, chemicals which are contained and dispersed by chemical weapons are called chemical warfare agents. As such, they are characterized by qualities important for their military deployment, such as their chemical structure and toxicity, the character of injury they cause, the period of latency, their resistance under environmental conditions, etc. Such characteristics are needed in the first place for an army planning an offensive use of chemical weapons, but of course, they should be known and considered also by those planning the defence against chemical weapons.

The question is whether this evidently military term, and the concept behind it, could become useful in the context of the convention prohibiting the production of all chemical weapons irrespective of the above-mentioned characteristics, and providing for their destruction without exception.

The introduction of the concept of chemical warfare agents was considered already in the very early phases of our negotiations, several years ago. It soon became evident, however, that such an approach would create several difficulties. If we proceeded along such lines, using military concepts and criteria, it could become difficult to avoid formulations resembling more the language of instructions for the use of chemical weapons rather than a disarmament document.

But the main question is if and how the concept could help to make the provisions of the convention more precise.

Providing for a total ban on all chemical weapons, the convention hardly needs to specify them very much. The concept of chemical warfare agents, as we understand it, implies the use of lists of corresponding agents. Speaking in terms of specific agents, however, one can in principle never cover the whole field of potential chemical weapons. Any list would always be only illustrative: there will be troubles with different military code-names, and it will not include chemicals kept in secret or those newly developed in the future etc.

According to such inherent restrictions, the concept could in fact be interpreted in such a way that only known chemical warfare agents, corresponding to all military criteria, should be declared and destroyed, while some others could be omitted. With the complex problem of new multi-component chemical weapons systems in mind, we should like to express our serious apprehension that the chemical warfare agents concept could fail, especially in this most important area of new kinds of chemical weapons.

For all these reasons, with regard to the scope of prohibition, we cannot see any more proper criterion than that of general purpose.

The criterion of toxicity is an additional one. It was adopted for the purpose of the convention later, after it had been recognized that there must be some kind of differentiation in some provisions of the convention (certainly not, however, in the scope): some chemicals are extremely dangerous and should be subject to a very strict regime of verification, while some could be monitored less strictly.