

(Mr. Houlliez, Belgium)

"I want to be known as the President who, working with our allies, the Soviets and others, led to the elimination of chemical warfare and chemical weapons ... And if I'm elected President, if I'm remembered for anything, it would be this: a complete and total ban on chemical weapons."

After his election, Mr. Bush reaffirmed this formal and sincere commitment publicly and repeatedly, and no one has any reason to doubt it. As Ambassador Friedersdorf recently recalled, moreover, the United States is now engaged in a programme for the elimination of its unitary chemical agents, which will be completed in 1997.

Fourthly, we also welcome the fact that, in response to the appeal made by the Paris Conference, many countries are participating in and contributing to our work as new observers. This particularly important fact is a good augury for the universality of the future convention. We should also stress the importance of the new accessions to the Geneva Protocol during and after the Paris Conference.

Fifthly, we must thank Sweden in particular for its efforts with regard to international trial inspections. The recommendations which Sweden prepared in September 1988 and the multilateral consultations which it has held in this forum have been very useful and fruitful for the conduct of trial inspections in a number of countries, including Belgium. The report on the trial inspection carried out by Belgium was recently transmitted to the secretariat. Belgium hopes to see a greater number of countries, from all groups and from all quarters of the world, also carrying out national inspections, whose usefulness for our work has already been amply demonstrated. Belgium is sure that a detailed comparative analysis of the inspections carried out by many countries will be a crucial source of concrete information based on experience which can only be of benefit to our work in the Ad hoc Committee. Once this detailed analysis has been carried out, we will be able to think of moving on to the next stage, that of multilateral trial inspections, which it will be important to prepare in the best interests of the objectives we are pursuing, identifying the many practical problems to be settled, some of which have been listed in the interesting working paper submitted on this topic by the delegation of the German Democratic Republic.

The progress which I have listed is, very happily, a sign of the fundamental change from a situation of near-standstill in the negotiations towards a new take-off which is both political and concrete in the right direction. We are particularly appreciative of this because Belgium, along with other States, has made an international commitment to renounce the production and use of chemical weapons, even before the conclusion of the convention. On 20 February last the Council of Ministers of the European Community adopted regulations whereby controls were placed on the export of eight chemicals capable of being used for the production of chemical weapons. However, like other States, Belgium does not believe that national and international measures can forestall the terrifying prospect of the development of chemical weapon production capabilities, which unfortunately is relatively easy. Together with other Governments which have set out their