

(Mr. Hayes, Ireland)

should be universally accepted and call on the States in a position to acquire nuclear weapons to refrain from doing so in the interests of all. Agreement now by the existing nuclear-weapon Powers to end testing would show that they, too, are willing to accept restraints and would give great encouragement to those of us who want to see a non-proliferation Treaty firmly established and accepted by all. In the words of the Palme Commission, a comprehensive test ban "would enhance the acceptability and credibility of the non-proliferation Treaty".

In view of the great importance which the Irish Government attaches to agreement on a comprehensive test ban, it is for us a matter of great regret that the prospects for reaching agreement have not improved in recent months. The trilateral talks to which we attach great importance have not resumed and recent reports are somewhat pessimistic regarding the prospects for an early resumption. However, we are confident that the last word has not been heard on this and we, for our part, continue to hope for an early resumption. It is our view that concrete discussion between the nuclear-weapon States principally involved is essential if the efforts of the Committee on Disarmament are to be crowned with success.

Those outside the Committee on Disarmament have watched your efforts within the Committee in recent years to come to grips with this most important question, including your efforts to agree on the establishment of a working group. We are, of course, aware that you did decide in April of this year to establish an Ad Hoc Working Group on a Nuclear Test Ban and that you agreed on the mandate which would be given to that Group. I must confess immediately that the mandate which was agreed on would not have been the one which we would have suggested. I would add that in our view the discussion should involve all the nuclear-weapon States.

I would recall that on 29 February 1972 the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, speaking to the CCD, the predecessor of this Committee, regarding a comprehensive test ban, stated: "I believe that all the technical and scientific aspects of the problem have been so fully explored that only a political decision is now necessary in order to achieve final agreement." The problem of verification has, of course, been closely linked over the years with discussion of a comprehensive test ban. However, it seems to my delegation that what the Secretary-General said in 1972 is certainly true today. The quest for an infallible verification method may prove to be a very long one, but the margin of error in verification is being constantly reduced by scientific developments in detection and identification. We must be prepared to seek a balanced solution. That, of course, is what the Secretary-General meant in 1972 when he expressed the view that only a political decision was now necessary in order to achieve final agreement.

From what I have said it will be clear why my delegation has had some initial reservations regarding the mandate of the new Ad Hoc Working Group. However, this does not mean that our attitude to it is a negative one. The establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group allows the Committee to start work on this most important subject. We are also encouraged by our experience of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Chemical Weapons which originally had what we might describe as a somewhat limited mandate. In spite of that limited mandate it has been able, as we know, to do extremely useful work. We would hope that in the light of that experience the Ad Hoc Working Group which has now been established to deal with the subject of a comprehensive test ban will be able to carry out similarly useful work.