

---

real sense, negotiating on behalf of the international community as a whole. It therefore behoves us to approach our tasks with as much energy, patience, skill and wisdom as is at our command. Our governments must be prepared to seek out common ground which can become a basis for practical, operable measures.

Our collective record in recent years is not something of which we can boast. In the decade since the conclusion of the Environmental Modification treaty, we have failed to reach agreement on a single arms control measure. The reasons for this are of course multiple. It cannot be attributed entirely to the parlous state of East-West relations, though this has at times been an important factor. On occasion, agreements which have seemed within reach have eluded our grasp sometimes because some of us have pressed to expand the scope of an agreement beyond what has been effectively negotiable in this forum. The objectives sought were legitimate, but there may have been too much readiness to pursue the ideal at the expense of the achievable.

However, not all of our difficulties are due to divergent purposes or failures of political will. There is an increasingly pressing need to re-examine our procedures and processes with a view to ensuring the optimal use of the limited time, resources and energy at our disposal. I shall not dwell on the matter at this time, having intervened more than once during our 1985 session to make this very point. Suffice it to say that there are several procedural habits and routines which have evolved in this forum which could usefully be re-assessed in order to make our work more efficient and, just as important, less contentious.

I would urge again that you as our conference president, as you have already pledged to do with the support and co-operation of all delegations, give priority attention during this session to exploring and examining ways by which we might, by agreement, improve and streamline our processes and procedures so that we might better serve our governments and the peoples whom they represent.

Whatever our concerns about procedural matters, however, it is our primary task to deal with the substantive items on our agenda. I have alluded already to the Canadian government's generally positive appreciation of the course of the negotiations thus far between the US and the USSR. While this should be a source of encouragement to us here, it should not prompt us to slacken our efforts but rather to intensify them. It should entitle us to a heightened expectation that in this forum, where our first obligation is to seek out common ground and expand areas of agreement, we will be able to avoid political polemics, invective and recriminatory exchanges, which are out of place in any serious negotiating forum.

As in recent years, the negotiation of a verifiable, comprehensive ban on chemical weapons is a priority item on our agenda. Modest but detectable progress was made on this item during the 1985 session, but there is still cause for disappointment in spite of the strenuous efforts of Ambassador Turbanski of Poland, the chairman of the chemical weapons *ad hoc* committee. Known instances of recent chemical weapons use should add to our collective sense of urgency to attain the earliest possible conclusion of such a ban. We note with particular attention the affirmation by President Reagan and Secretary-General Gorbachev in their joint statement of their intent to "accelerate their efforts to conclude an effective and verifiable international convention" as well as their intention to "initiate a dialogue on

---