

(Mr. Velayati, Islamic Republic of Iran)

... One of the most significant items on the agenda of this negotiating body is the elimination of chemical weapons. The horrors of chemical warfare were hardly remembered in 1980. Yet, the 1980s became a turning point in the banalization of chemical weapons and their treatment as conventional ones. The almost unabated and indiscriminate use of these weapons of mass destruction by Iraq in the course of its war of aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran added yet another frightening dimension; that is, even this despicable method of warfare and genocide can be employed almost with impunity in a world dominated by political expediency. Repeated warnings by the Islamic Republic of Iran, reports by international mass media, and even eight reports produced by United Nations teams of experts did not create any genuine reaction by the international diplomatic community, or even the States parties to the Geneva Protocol of 1925. And in this atmosphere of silence and acquiescence, the world witnessed a quantitative and qualitative intensification of chemical warfare by Iraq.

Chemical warfare started with sporadic use of chemical weapons in limited areas and developed into a regular method of warfare. The victims, who in 1981 were a limited number of Iranian soldiers, grew in numbers, and finally engulfed innocent Iranian civilians in Sardasht. The emotional report of United Nations specialists witnessing the martyrdom of chemically wounded children did not move the custodians of international peace, security, law and human rights. Had they reacted differently, the Iraqi régime might have been deterred from resorting to such a massive chemical attack in its genocide in Halabja. The chemical agent with which Iraq started its chemical warfare was simple mustard gas. However, they gradually moved on to technologically sophisticated nerve gas and agents such as Sarin and Soman. This development is not only significant because of the vast difference in toxicity, but also because of the significant change in the required technology. Sarin cannot be produced with the normal equipment of pesticide plants. It is evident, therefore, that the technology for the production of these agents was supplied to Iraq, regrettably, in the course of the war and certainly after the Iraqi policy of chemical warfare had become public knowledge.

The delivery system of chemical weapons had an even more dramatic development. According to the report of the United Nations team, in 1984, the delivery system was so imperfect that many of the chemical bombs did not even operate. By 1986, this shortcoming had already been overcome. In addition, spray tanks, and more importantly surface-to-surface missiles carrying chemical agents, were introduced, once again proving the complicity of others in the criminal development of the Iraqi chemical war machine.

The Halabja chemical massacre shocked international public opinion and created the expectation that effective measures would be taken in order to reverse the conventional approach of indiscriminate use of chemical weapons. Against this background, and following the establishment of a cease-fire