

(Mr. Benhima, Morocco)

... At a time when international relations are experiencing great changes owing to the East-West rapprochement and the replacement of confrontation and distrust by dialogue, the Conference must ensure that large-scale mobilization goes hand in hand with this evolution. The cosmogony of rigid positions that has always presided over our debates and our negotiations is in the process of becoming obsolete, thereby aggravating the risk that our Conference will be sidelined by standing aside from this great epic of disarmament. The Conference, which already has 10 years of work behind it, unfortunately has few achievements to its credit - except for the chemical weapons convention - bearing in mind the effort and energy invested up till now in discharging its mandate. That is why at the beginning of this new period we must strive to find other paths in order not to commit the error of revelling in lethargy and resignation.

The Conference could have drawn on this progression by emphasizing the necessary flexibility which would make it possible, without denying or renouncing principles, to reach agreement on the greatest number of common denominators that can overcome the deadlock in the negotiations. The wind of change is blowing throughout the world. And it is time for the Conference on Disarmament to move into its slipstream. In fact, this session could not begin under better auspices. The success of the Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons and the announcement by the Soviet Union that it is to begin destroying its chemical weapons stocks without waiting for the conclusion of the convention, the recent agreement in Vienna concerning the negotiating mandate on conventional weapons in Europe, testify - if proof were still needed - to the new trends in international relations. Indeed, these recent developments, which are a source of great satisfaction for us all, must inspire our Conference. It must find in them the political impetus, as well as the example to be followed, so that its work may evolve in the direction of the hopes it carries with it.

The international Conference on chemical weapons that was held in Paris last month is indisputably an event of great historical significance. Besides the new lease of life that it gave to the Geneva Protocol of 1925, it was the