

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

As soon as all member countries of this Conference, and therefore the main presumed possessors of this weapon, have demonstrated the will to achieve an agreement on the total prohibition of its manufacture, to accept the elimination of their weapon stockpiles and production facilities under international control, there is no possible justification for not considering that the active pursuit and rapid conclusion of our work are a matter of priority, at the very moment when all participants in the convention demonstrate an equal interest in the solution of verification problems which constitute, we are well aware, the main difficulty.

So long as this convention has not been concluded and ratified by a significant group of States, the outcome of our efforts will remain uncertain and the security risks connected with chemical weapons will continue to exist. It is the success of these negotiations, which are of course difficult but not insurmountably so, that will give expression to the desire so often proclaimed by so many to make a contribution to that end, and confirm beyond doubt the sincerity of our declarations.

We are, I think, all aware of the full significance that this crowning of our efforts would have. We shall have shown that it is possible to prohibit totally and effectively an entire category of weapons which is not merely foreseeable or hypothetical but which exists. We shall have shown in particular that it is possible to agree on procedures for effective verification and for all of us to submit to them, without any exception.

In our opinion, it would not be going too far to say that the future of disarmament hinges on such concrete demonstrations, since it is evident that the more a disarmament agreement is significant for the security of States the more it should be verified, for the insecurity created by any violations would be more serious.

The Belgium delegation has welcomed the pragmatic and more positive turn which the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons has taken since last autumn. It hopes that the various working groups will continue their efforts along that promising path.