

(Mr. Bottai, Italy)

Allow me to briefly elaborate on some of these essential issues still pending. First of all, on the problem of verification which for years has been a stumbling-block to progress in various fields of disarmament. Italy considers that the convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons will be an unprecedented achievement in multilateral disarmament, in that it proposes a new set of verification measures not applicable solely to a given sector, whose management has been entrusted to a neutral and impartial organization. In the establishment of a genuine superpartes system lies the best possible guarantee that any bilateral aspect, which is usually involved when a country has doubts about compliance by someone else, will be adequately taken into account, while at the same time discouraging the inappropriate exercise of the right to trigger a challenge inspection. It seems to us that the team of inspectors, drawing on its autonomous powers of neutral evaluation, will be in the best position to assess, on site, whether the suspicion prompting the request justifies the prosecution or the interruption of the inspection; and to estimate the degree of intrusiveness required, without prejudice to the basic needs for the protection of confidentiality.

Those in Europe who have already opened up their national borders to intrusive bilateral inspections of military activities cannot but recognize the importance of the "supernational" nature of the convention, as an anticipation of a new era characterized by the increasing role of the international community in the consolidation of peace and security. Along the same line of thinking, Italy does not believe that its own continuous presence within the executive council would be essential for the protection of its national interests, provided the structure and functioning of the council reflects such a "new way of thinking" - looking ahead beyond the year 2000 and not backwards - and on the condition that the relevance of a country's chemical industry is given due consideration.

Furthermore, the convention will introduce new forms of collective solidarity, as in the case of assistance and protection against use or threat of use, as well as the concern to safeguard the economic and technological development of member States and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities not prohibited by the ban. Italy is also prepared to examine possible forms of cooperation to facilitate the burdensome tasks of destruction required by the convention.

The fact that important sectors of chemical industry, including those parts considered as "relevant" located also in our country, will be affected by the implementation of the convention, should not be taken lightly. We are aware of the concerns felt by industry about attaining a realistic balance between management of available resources and satisfactory deterrence without being overburdened with declarations and inspections. For this reason we are in favour of a pragmatic approach in order to leave a certain margin of discretion to the future organization and to ensure that the convention will be able, after its initial phase of application, to adapt itself to changing circumstances. In view of this, Italy is in favour of adopting an amendment procedure which, whilst naturally safeguarding the essential features of the ban, does not confine the convention within excessively rigid boundaries.