

(The President)

... Reviewing now the practical business the Netherlands presidency had to transact, I observe the following. As usual at the opening of the annual session, the Conference had to deal with a number of organizational questions, which are required to provide appropriate frameworks for our consideration of substantive questions. Bringing about an effective, verifiable, truly global convention banning chemical weapons at the earliest date is a political priority. The sustained progress achieved in the negotiations in this multilateral body as well as in the bilateral rounds between the United States and the Soviet Union constitute a momentum in itself whose impact on our work on chemical weapons in the Conference on Disarmament cannot fail to be noticed.

In the Netherlands view it was vital to get the CW negotiations in 1990 started with a proper mandate as soon as possible. Establishing an appropriate mandate was a complex issue in itself. I felt very encouraged, however, by the positive and flexible attitude taken by all delegations. I therefore welcome the substantial improvement achieved this year in the mandate of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. This is a major step forward after several years of work under the previous, more limited mandate. The participation of an unparalleled number of non-member States in our work on a CW ban holds great promise for the universality of this CW convention, indeed a foremost requirement. Combining all these factors, I submit that our chances for success in relation to the conclusion of the long-desired CW convention are better than ever. Indeed, the time has come to reap the fruits of our efforts.

In assessing the organization of work of the Conference during the month of February, I would like to note that early agreement was reached on the establishment of the Ad hoc Committees on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-nuclear-weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons and on Radiological Weapons. Their recently appointed Chairmen, Ambassadors Negrotto Cambiaso and Varga respectively, are now consulting on preparations for the sessions of those subsidiary bodies.

We have also held consultations in connection with the first part of agenda item 7, entitled "New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons". Those consultations indicated that it would be advisable to keep this matter under review and to deal with it whenever necessary, possibly at informal meetings of the Conference.

I would like to stress the importance of the decisions taken on requests from non-members to participate in the work of the Conference. During the month of February, we took action on an unprecedented number of

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