

Mr. de la BAUME (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, before we give our full agreement to the text of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, which marks a new, very positive step in the elaboration of the convention to ban such weapons which we all hope for, I must on behalf of the French delegation react to a particular point raised during the presentation of the report by the President of the Committee on 27 August.

I note that in his comments on article IV, the Chairman of the Committee said that we were now in a situation where only one country "still has some reservations on openly declaring and accepting verification at all stockpile locations as soon as 30 days after the entry into force of the convention". This very explicit statement refers to the French position, which is thus singled out and summarized in an inadequate manner.

I must first of all note that at no other point in his presentation did the Chairman single out any other delegation, whereas on many items various countries also have quite specific positions. Therefore as far as our delegation is concerned there is an unfortunate difference in treatment. I do not feel that this sort of approach is likely to facilitate smooth negotiations.

I would now like to recall the facts. The French delegation declared that it was prepared to accept the declaration of the stockpile locations on the thirtieth day after the entry into force of the Convention. While taking such a step forward regarding the principle for all stocks, it proposed in working paper CD/757, which was submitted on 11 June last, that special consideration should be given to ways and means of declaring security stocks: whilst accepting the possibility of a public and complete declaration of such stocks, we pointed out that it might be preferable not to make such a declaration public for reasons of security, but to resort to the so-called sealed envelope procedure. In any event, and even if this procedure were to be adopted, the location of the stock would be communicated to the international authority and would be open to challenge inspection.

(Mr. de la Baume, France)

Whilst moving forward on the question of declarations of location, we wanted to underscore the importance of security questions. Indeed, I observe that the Chairman's presentation itself notes on the same page 3, in the last paragraph, that the much discussed issue of the order of destruction of stocks is related to fundamental security concerns. I would take the liberty of recalling that it is indeed our special position on location which has to be tied in directly with the debate under way on this subject, on the subject of which the Chairman of the Committee has himself invited all delegations to give careful attention to the relevant sections of the report and to look for mutual acceptable solutions.

Briefly put, our position on location, which has changed appreciably this year, is a specific aspect of the general debate on security. Both for reasons of form and for reasons of substance, it therefore seems to us that the remark on draft article IV which singles out my country is unfortunate and could have been avoided.