

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 401st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with its programme of work the Conference will continue its consideration of agenda item 4, "Chemical weapons". However, in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure any member wishing to do so may raise any other matter relating to the work of the Conference. Once we have finished the list of speakers for today I will convene a short informal meeting of the Conference to consider a request for participation from a non-member State. We shall then resume the plenary so as to formalize any agreement we may reach in the informal meeting. I have on the list of speakers for this plenary meeting the representatives of Argentina and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. I now give the floor to the first speaker on my list, the representative of Argentina, Ambassador Cámpora.

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(Mr. Cámpora, Argentina)

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The negotiation of a convention that would ban chemical weapons is of unprecedented importance. This is a real leading case for the international community, since never yet has it undertaken the drafting of an instrument of such political and technical complexity in the field of disarmament with a view to eliminating weapons of real military significance. The task that has been started implies that national territories will be opened up to international scrutiny. This in itself will be a very important step in the strengthening of international confidence.

It is difficult to imagine the Major Powers open to international inspection to verify the destruction of their arsenals of chemical weapons and production installations. However, all the negotiations are directed towards that aim, and there should be no retreat or vacillation in achieving it.

We have heard so many times delegations from the Great Powers state here that the task of the Conference on Disarmament should be to give priority to the negotiation of a convention prohibiting chemical weapons that we cannot accept at this stage of our work any pretext which would hinder the speedy conclusion of that instrument.