

Mr. WAGENMAKERS (Netherlands): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We, the representatives of the CD member States, have been provided with palpable proof of the successful application of your diplomatic skill and talent in the discharge of duties pertaining to the high office that is yours. Most important, the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons has been set to work smoothly without delay. Then, the package decision on the admission of non-member States forms no small part of the credit you raised. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Horacio Arteaga of Venezuela, for his high-quality contribution to the CD's work, both in the last month of the 1991 session and during the following inter-sessional period.

... As the Chairman of the 1991 Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons stated in introducing its report to the plenary on 6 February last, we have reached the final stage of the negotiations on a chemical weapons convention. We have set ourselves a deadline. And we are going to meet that deadline. Keeping that in mind, it is not too early to start thinking seriously about practical steps in preparation for the implementation of the convention.

Granted, a considerable amount of preparatory work has already been done. Studies have been made on the structure and cost of the future Organization on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) by, inter alia, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, the Netherlands and independent consultants. Finland and the Netherlands jointly presented papers last year on the required laboratory facilities for the organization and their quality control. A wealth of material on the tasks of the Preparatory Commission can be found in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons.

Last August, when the Ambassadors to the CD visited The Hague with a view to familiarizing themselves with The Hague as the proposed seat of the OPCW, they were asked whether they thought a seminar on the OPCW, especially during its early years of existence, would assist our deliberations, here in Geneva. Encouraged by the many positive answers received, the competent Netherlands authorities have further examined the idea of holding such a seminar and decided to go ahead with it.

I take pleasure in announcing now that the Netherlands will organize a brief seminar on practical aspects of the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in its early years. The seminar, under the title "CPCW, the First Five Years", will be held at The Hague on 8 and 9 May 1992.