

(Mr. Ait-Chaalal, Algeria)

General Assembly of the United Nations and also the terms of the Final Declaration of Paris. It was with these recommendations in mind, and drawing inspiration from a firm determination to put them into practice, that at the very beginning of the present session of the Conference the Group of 21 proposed - alas in vain - that the Committee's mandate should contain a reference to the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons. We continue to hope that the Conference will review the possibility of improving the mandate of its Committee at the beginning of the next session.

As regards the actual work of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, we would mention the merits of the thematic approach in giving a new stimulus to negotiation within our Conference. This approach has made it possible, above and beyond the identification of the political and technical difficulties inherent in the future convention, to focus efforts better so as to overcome differences on some of the most contentious issues. However, at the present state of negotiations an objective assessment of results does not prompt great optimism. Much remains to be done on fundamental issues, which are certainly benefiting from great efforts and consultations, but will still require for their solution considerable perseverance, imagination and, above all, a common will to succeed. We cherish the hope that no effort will be spared to reach a convention which is comprehensive in its content, durable in its life time, universal in scope and non-discriminatory in its application. It must on no account be reduced to a simple non-proliferation treaty or place any obstacle in the path of the development of the chemical industry, the transfer of technology or international co-operation for peaceful purposes in this domain. Meanwhile, would it not be significant if the Powers which currently possess gigantic arsenals of chemical weapons of all kinds set an example by beginning the destruction of their existing stocks, thus offering concrete proof of their determination to banish such weapons? By means of such actions they would undoubtedly make a decisive contribution to speeding up the process which should lead to the conclusion of a comprehensive and global convention banning chemical weapons for ever.

The negotiations on a chemical weapons ban are certainly of considerable importance. Today the international community is fully aware of the need to eliminate such weapons. But these negotiations, however important they may be, cannot eclipse, still less conceal, the terrible dangers which weigh upon humanity because of the existence of nuclear weapons. The trees must not be allowed to hide the forest. Whatever the prevailing circumstances and the needs of the moment, the hierarchy of priorities remains exactly the same as that established by international bodies and profoundly felt by the world community because of the extent and the seriousness of the real dangers which threaten it. The negotiations on a chemical weapons ban must be properly assessed and given their rightful place in the general and overall process of disarmament in relation to the real concerns the international community, and its aspirations for the establishment of equal security for all.