

(Mr. van den Broek, Netherlands)

If there is one negotiating process which has been the subject of changing opinions in recent years, it is the negotiations on a chemical weapons treaty. Not only has the subject of chemical weapons changed from being a predominantly East-West affair to being a world-wide issue, but attitudes to the verification of such a treaty have also undergone a drastic change. If we had concluded a treaty in the 1970s, it would presumably have been inadequate, and we would probably have regretted it. Now that agreement has been reached on routine inspections in their various forms and challenge inspections on an "anywhere, any time" basis, the situation is completely different.

There has certainly been no lack of interest in the subject. It is, however, ironic that it has been the renewed and intensive use of chemical weapons which has shocked the world community into realizing that the only answer is a comprehensive world-wide ban on chemical weapons. Against this background, Governments have rightly taken measures to curb the present proliferation of chemical weapons, including export control measures and action to enlist the co-operation of the chemical industry. However, without the prospect of a treaty for the total elimination of these weapons once and for all, these measures will not be effective in the long run. The present export control measures are therefore of a temporary nature, and will remain in force until agreement on a truly universal ban on chemical weapons has been reached.

Negotiations are admittedly proceeding slowly. However, judging from the effort and work being put into ensuring that a treaty is completed in the foreseeable future, the problem involves not so much a lack of political will as the intractable nature of the subject itself. One of the main difficulties, as we know, is the vital need for an effective verification system. The outlines of such a system are beginning to take shape; we have certainly advanced considerably since the last time I had the privilege of addressing the Conference on Disarmament in July 1987. This year a good deal of attention will again have to be devoted to routine inspections and above all to ad hoc verification measures for plants which are capable of producing chemical weapons but are not subject to routine inspections. Other important subjects are the development of procedures for challenge inspections and the verification of the destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles - subject, I would add, to appropriate environmental safeguards. We will also have to ensure that the full prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, including during the 10-year transitional period following the treaty's entry into force, finds a proper place in the convention.

Finally, we shall have to consider ways and means to get the treaty accepted worldwide. An important pre-condition for this is that all States which are not members of the Conference on Disarmament should be able to attend the negotiations as participants if they wish to do so; this is an important means of furthering world-wide adherence to the treaty. It should also be made crystal clear that destruction of all chemical weapons is the principle objective; we do not want "haves" and "have-nots".

I should like to take this opportunity to express my respect and admiration for the tremendous effort which has been put into this matter here and at the bilateral negotiations. The results of the bilateral rounds