

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR

On 16 December 1987, the United States of America began manufacturing a new generation of chemical weapons - binary weapons. A totally unprovoked step has thus been made towards a further escalation of the chemical arms race.

This militaristic action was taken despite the fact that considerable progress has been achieved at the Geneva negotiations on the complete and general prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons, thereby bringing much closer the goal of ridding mankind of the chemical threat. Moreover, at the summit meeting in Washington a week earlier, the American leadership had expressed its commitment to the elaboration of a verifiable comprehensive and effective international convention on the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons and had agreed on the need for more intensive negotiations with a view to concluding it.

The inevitable conclusion is that, having embarked upon a course of rearming with binary chemical weapons, the United States is about to make a choice uncondusive to agreement on chemical disarmament. The binary weapons programme is obviously the reason why the United States has recently been slowing down the negotiations of the prohibition of chemical weapons in Geneva.

The American binary weapons programme is also by no means consistent with the emerging process of confidence-building in the field of chemical weapons, manifestations of which have been the very recent tour by the participants in the negotiations, including the United States, of the Soviet military facility at Shikhany and the visit by Soviet experts to the American chemical weapons facility at Tooele, Utah.

However, these are not the only negative consequences of the fact that the United States has begun to rearm with binary weapons. Although in words the United States loudly declares its concern about the possibility of other States acquiring chemical weapons, through its deeds it is in fact contributing to the proliferation of chemical weapons by setting a bad example to those countries which are not yet manufacturing them.

In their attempts to justify the beginning of the manufacture of binary weapons in the eyes of world public opinion, American representatives usually refer to what they allege is the chemical threat from the Soviet Union. To this end, they cite utterly fantastic "data" regarding stockpiles of chemical weapons in the USSR. They assert that these stockpiles amount to between 250,000 and 700,000 tonnes of chemical warfare agents and that the capability of the USSR in this field is many times superior to that of the United States.

Such deceit must be brought to an end. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR is authorized to state that the Soviet Union's stocks of chemical weapons comprise no more than 50,000 tonnes of chemical warfare agents. That, according to estimates by Soviet experts, roughly corresponds to the stockpiles of chemical weapons held by the United States. In addition, all Soviet chemical weapons are kept within the territory of the USSR.

Those who speculate about the Soviet chemical threat deliberately ignore the fact that it is precisely the Soviet Union which has been consistently endeavouring at the Geneva talks to achieve the earliest possible complete