

(Ms Theorin, Sweden)

In Europe, the most over-armed of all continents, the Stockholm Conference achieved militarily and politically significant results. A breakthrough was made for the principle of on-site inspection of compliance with treaties on disarmament and confidence-building. Last September, a successful review Conference of the Bacteriological Weapons Convention was held in here in Geneva. Also at that Conference, progress was made regarding measures to strengthen and enhance the Convention. During the latest session of the General Assembly, the First Committee produced consensus resolutions on such traditionally controversial topics as verification and compliance. In addition to established priority issues in the nuclear field, increased and appropriate attention was paid to the conventional arms race. Several resolutions acknowledged progress made here in the Conference on Disarmament on a chemical weapons convention. On the main issue of a nuclear test ban, a development took place that should give the Conference a good opportunity finally to agree on a mandate to deal with all aspects of the matter.

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The international context of the negotiations on chemical weapons gives cause for serious concern. Chemical weapons have been used by Iraq in the war with Iran, disregarding rules of international law. In Europe, very large chemical weapons stockpiles exist and further development, production and deployment of such weapons is under way. Major military Powers have prepared themselves to carry out chemical warfare. The worldwide spread of chemical weapons is a clear possibility, in some cases even a definite probability. There is no alternative to the conclusion of a comprehensive convention banning all chemical weapons.

After almost two decades of work and negotiation, it has been possible to address most of the elements which are necessary ingredients of a treaty. A structure and the early drafts of the treaty have been developed. We must not allow the steady pace of negotiations, and the smooth functioning of this multilateral negotiating body, to lull us into accepting slow progress and a long-term perspective. If that happens, weapons development will overtake us and ruin our efforts. In order to further the negotiations, all countries producing or considering the production of chemical weapons, unitary as well as binary, should refrain from it during the course of the negotiations. Disarmament can never be furthered through increased armaments. Against this background, any production of chemical weapons is regrettable. My Government attaches the utmost importance to this negotiation and will spare no effort to assure its urgent and successful conclusion.