

(Mr. Natwar-Singh, India)

Let me now turn to a somewhat more positive aspect of the work of the CD, where considerable progress has been made during the last year. I refer to the negotiations relating to a chemical weapons convention. A comprehensive, universal and effective prohibition on chemical weapons would lead to an enhancement of security for all nations by removing an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

The Final Declaration of the recently concluded Paris Conference, in which I participated, reflects clearly the urgency of concluding "at an early date, a convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons, and on their destruction". We share the sense of urgency reflected in the Final Declaration, and would urge the Conference on Disarmament to set itself a time frame within which to conclude its negotiations on a chemical weapons convention. We are happily close enough to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Any slow-down at this critical stage would be a serious setback to our efforts, as has happened in other areas of disarmament negotiations in the past. At the same time we also need to refrain from actions which may complicate or frustrate the momentum of the negotiations.

The time has come for us to reflect on how the convention will enter into force with the least possible delay. In our view, an open-ended preparatory commission would need to be set up once the convention is opened for signature. In this interim period till the convention enters into force after the requisite number of instruments of ratification are received, the preparatory commission will have to prepare for the first general conference of the States parties, and also enter into procedural and technical details with the host country and States parties. At present, we observe that far too much time in the Ad hoc Committee is devoted to technical details which divert attention from the political issues that still remain to be resolved. Such details could be identified and resolved by the preparatory commission. The time has come for us to look forward and move with vigour and decisiveness. A clear approach would in itself provide a positive thrust to negotiations in the CD.