

(Mr. Shevardnadze, USSR)

... I would like to make a few comments about one long-sought goal which is within reach and which the Conference on Disarmament has almost attained, an event of great significance for all of mankind -- a complete ban on chemical weapons and the elimination of their stockpiles. Two thirds of a century have passed since the first gas attack at Ypres, which marked the beginning of the military use of this barbaric weapon of mass annihilation. Ever since, Governments of many nations and various international forums have sought to devise legal constraints on the production and use of lethal substances, but only now, in our time, is it becoming possible to adopt a historic convention to that effect.

What could stand in the way of this? Only attempts to outline the draft of a future treaty with one hand while assembling canisters of binary chemical weapons with the other.

Need one say how immoral this is, how incompatible with the goal before us?

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The Soviet Union will continue to co-operate actively with all the participants in the Conference on Disarmament so that the long-awaited convention becomes a reality. We did not dramatize the debates and differences that emerged in the process. One thing alone was considered absolutely imperative -- that the convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons and destruction of their stockpiles should be adopted, and as early as possible.

I am instructed to inform you that the Soviet delegation at the negotiations on this question will proceed from the need to make legally binding the principle of mandatory challenge inspections without the right of refusal. This decision is another vivid manifestation of our commitment to genuine and effective verification, in accordance with the principles of new political thinking.

In order to build an atmosphere of trust, and in the interests of an early conclusion of an international convention, the Soviet side invites the participants in the chemical weapons negotiations to visit the Soviet military facility at Shikhany to see standard items of our chemical weapons and observe the technology for the destruction of chemical weapons at a mobile facility. Later we will invite experts to the special chemical weapon destruction plant now being built in the vicinity of the town of Chapayevsk.

In making this announcement I hope that the participants in the Conference will duly appreciate our desire to untie the most complicated knots that have appeared in the process of drawing up the convention.