

(Mr. Azambuja, Brazil)

This conviction leads me to the thought that, while we whole-heartedly support energetic and creative efforts by our Conference through its Ad hoc Committee and its prestigious working groups, we should be wary of inviting further ideas and constructs, and that what we have already on the table in front of us is an excessive menu of both concepts and instruments for action. We may be fast approaching the point - if we are not there already - where further refinements of principles and procedures might become counter-productive and lead to a blurring of vision and dispersion of focus. We all know that an over-abundance of time is almost as bad as a shortage in terms of the quality of the final product.

Not only are we endangered by an excess of ideas and contributions; we also risk losing the momentum that has been built up, and which has to a not inconsiderable degree been dissipated throughout the inconclusive year of 1989. In other words, and with great candour: in my view we have a manageable task on our hands; we have assembled virtually all the necessary building-blocks; as a body, and with appropriate expert assistance, we are quite competent to complete the task. World opinion is behind us. So is the overall sympathy of chemical industries everywhere. The international climate is frankly encouraging and relaxed. If, with all these advantages, we fail to deliver our product within a reasonable time frame, my assessment is that this Conference will be hard put to it to justify its existence and continued relevance.

My optimism does not lead me to overlook the fact that there are serious questions still outstanding, regarding which positions are rather far apart. Among them I would list some unresolved items relating to scope, the relationship of the future chemical weapons convention to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the order of destruction, the composition and decision-making of the Executive Council, challenge inspection and assistance. I do not include article XI on this list, for I consider that differences around this matter are narrowing. Even if the list seems impressive, at first sight, we should remember that many of these issues involve political decisions - the sort of give and take that normally only occurs in the final stages of negotiations, when the goal is in sight and all bargaining chips have been used. If all of us could be convinced of the urgency of concluding our draft convention, these outstanding items would certainly be of no great account. A division of duties between the Committee as a negotiating forum (tasked with drafting the body of the convention), the preparatory committee (to which we could entrust the finalization of some more detailed and technical parts of the convention) and the future organization (to which we could leave its final actual implementation) could be a way of looking at the negotiations in a new light and from a reinvigorating perspective.

As this is my first statement to the 1990 session of the Conference on Disarmament, I could not but acknowledge and comment on some of the events that have occurred since September last: the fast and far-reaching changes in the international political landscape - against a background of persistent sluggishness in addressing the so-called North-South problems; the fact that our negotiating forum has yet to succeed in incorporating these new sources of energy into its machinery; the need to proceed to the requisite rethinking of