

(Mr. Cámpora, Argentina)

Paris from 7 to 11 January last. I consider that this is an appropriate occasion to express our gratitude to the Government of France for the efficient organization of the Conference as well as the hospitality offered to delegations. The Paris Conference was an international event of great significance in the long history of multilateral efforts aimed at limiting and eliminating chemical weapons. A hundred years have elapsed since the signature of the Hague Declaration in 1899, a pioneering document in this field, inasmuch as it banned the use of projectiles to spread asphyxiating and poisonous gases. Moreover, 63 years have passed since the Geneva Protocol was signed.

Seen in a historical perspective, the Paris Conference marks the start of the final stage in the process towards chemical disarmament. The participation of delegations from 149 States, in other words practically the entire international community, as well as the presence of numerous Ministers for Foreign Affairs, demonstrated the importance of a meeting that had a great impact on world public opinion. The adoption of the Final Declaration by consensus proved that it is possible to reach agreement at a multilateral level on a global scale, thus strengthening this dimension of disarmament. The Declaration also includes a unanimous condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and emphasizes the need to finalize the text of the convention at an early date. The Conference on Disarmament must respond to this appeal in an effective way, both at the procedural level and as regards the substantive issues in the negotiations, because it could not continue its work in a routine manner, impervious to the influence of such a singular political development. The Paris Conference not only focused the attention of world public opinion on the problem of the existence of chemical weapons, but also raised growing expectations in respect of negotiations on the convention. In this regard, we deem it important to draw the attention of the Conference to the terms of the statement made by the Group of 21 on 7 February, expressing the views of the neutral and non-aligned countries on the need to bring the terms of the mandate of the ad hoc committee on this subject into line with the political commitment entered into by our Governments, and by almost the entire international community, through the above-mentioned pronouncements. The message of the Paris Conference must be put into practice now, and to this end the designation of the representative of France, Ambassador Pierre Morel, to preside over the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons this year seems to us to be a very timely decision.